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Friday, September 21, 2018

Speaker: The Honourable Geoff Regan

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Friday, September 21, 2018

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayer

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1000)

[*Translation*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (for the Minister of National Defence) moved that Bill C-77, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be addressing the House today on the subject of this important bill. This is my first time speaking as Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Before I begin, I want to thank all the women and men of the Canadian Armed Forces for the outstanding service they give every day to this country and to all Canadians. We are deeply grateful to them.

I also want to thank the staff of the Department of National Defence. I am very much looking forward to working with them. They work hard every day to make sure we get solid policy and strong legislation, and we greatly appreciate their efforts.

Lastly, I want to thank all our veterans. We owe them a tremendous debt. They fought tirelessly so that we could live in this big, beautiful country.

I am also really looking forward to working with the Minister of National Defence. I think we are going to get some amazing things done this year.

The Prime Minister asked our colleague, the Minister of Justice, to do a comprehensive review of the justice system. In the same spirit, our government is committed to reviewing, modernizing and improving our civil and military justice systems.

Bill C-77 will bring our military justice system in line with the kind of justice system the Canadian Armed Forces are entitled to and the kind Canadians expect.

Canada's military justice system is rooted in centuries of practice around the world. Monarchs, army generals and political leaders have long recognized the importance of having a disciplined military.

A series of studies and public inquiries were conducted following the legislative changes made between 1998 and 2013. Those changes resulted in the system we have in place today.

Today, we are proposing a number of changes to the National Defence Act. Some are minor changes, while others are more significant. Central to those changes are the members of our military forces. The women and men in the Canadian Armed Forces make extraordinary sacrifices for their country every day.

Bill C-77 provides for changes that will improve the military justice system by ensuring that the system provides proper support for the Canadian Armed Forces in its efforts to maintain discipline, efficiency and morale within its ranks.

These changes will also reflect our government's promise to promote reconciliation and renew our relationship with indigenous peoples.

These changes will discourage prejudice- or hate-motivated behaviour toward the LGBTQ community based on gender identity or expression. They will also ensure that the rights of victims will be protected throughout the judicial process and that both people and support for military families are our top priorities.

Before I continue, I would like to come back to the Auditor General's report on the administration of justice in the Canadian Armed Forces, which was released last spring, shortly after Bill C-77 was introduced.

We thank the Auditor General for his important work, and we accept his recommendations. Unfortunately, this report shows how the previous government neglected not only our troops but also the military justice system, which is an important part of military discipline and morale within the Canadian Armed Forces.

These recommendations were very timely, since the government had just introduced a bill to improve the military justice system.

Unlike the previous government, we are determined to ensure that we have an effective military justice system. What is more, I can assure the House that the judge advocate general is already engaged in the implementation phase of her action plan to respond to each of the auditor's nine recommendations.

These measures include a new case management system that makes it possible for cases to be monitored in real time, as well as a new performance evaluation tool to help us assess how well the military justice system is working.

This will help significantly reduce delays by improving the way military justice cases are managed. However, this is not just about speeding up the process. We also want to ensure that the system works well for everyone.

Now I would like to talk about some of the changes we are proposing in the bill. I hope I can count on all my colleagues to support this important initiative for all our women and men in uniform.

The proposed summary hearings will help improve the flexibility and effectiveness of the military justice system by allowing the chain of command to address minor service infractions quickly and fairly at the unit level.

Naturally, the most serious cases will be referred to the courts martial. There will be no summary process and military commanders who preside over a summary hearing will only be able to impose non-criminal penalties for service offences.

● (1005)

Since launching our "Strong, Secure, Engaged" defence policy last year, we have worked very hard to strengthen the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces and improve support for our members. Accordingly, another important change set out in the bill being debated in the House today concerns the sentencing process for indigenous offenders.

The Prime Minister has stated that there is no relationship more important to our government and to Canada than the one with indigenous peoples. We are all greatly concerned by the fact that indigenous people are overrepresented in the criminal justice system. I would like to point out that this is not the case in the military justice system. Thanks to real measures such as this one, we will strengthen our nation-to-nation relationship and continue our journey of healing.

The amendments proposed in Bill C-77 are in line with what we are doing with Operation HONOUR, and they will help us create a positive, respectful environment within our armed forces. I must digress a little bit to say that, regardless of this bill, all forms of inappropriate sexual conduct are completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated within the Canadian Armed Forces or within our society. This is why we are taking decisive action as part of Operation HONOUR to combat and eliminate this type of behaviour. We will continue working until all of our members are able to carry out their duties in an environment free from harassment and discrimination.

The biggest change this bill will bring about is that it will enshrine the rights of victims in the military justice system. This is a victim-based approach that protects victims' rights.

We will make sure that military justice aligns with the civil system with respect to LGBTQ2 rights. In 2017, our government added gender identity and expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination set out in the Canadian Human Rights Act. At the same time, we have been working hard to change the culture, through Operation HONOUR and other initiatives, to make our forces more diverse and inclusive. This bill is another step in that direction.

It calls for harsher sanctions and penalties for service infractions or offences motivated by prejudice or hate based on gender identity or expression. The biggest change proposed in Bill C-77 is clearly aimed at establishing rights for all victims within the military justice system. A new division entitled "Declaration of Victims Rights" will be added to the Code of Service Discipline to specify that victims have a right to information, protection and participation throughout the military justice process.

The new provisions of this act will have a clear, perceptible and real impact on the military justice system. The declaration will give victims a voice and support. It will protect four new rights for service offence victims.

The first new right is the right to information, which will ensure that victims understand the process and the services and programs at their disposal, including the process for filing a complaint if they believe that their rights under the declaration have been infringed or denied. The military justice system can be intimidating and hard to understand. That is why we are adding this provision.

The bill provides for the appointment of liaison officers to guide the victim through the process and explain how the system works. Victims also have the right to be informed about the investigation and prosecution of the offence and the sentence handed down to the person who caused them harm.

Then, there is the right to protection, which guarantees that the safety and privacy of victims will be taken into account at every step of the military justice process. That includes protection of victims' identity, when necessary, and measures to protect them from intimidation or retaliation.

The right to participation guarantees victims the right to share their views with military justice system authorities and ensures that those views are taken into account when authorities make their decision. Victims can also present a victim impact statement before the court martial so that the military judge fully understands the harm done to the victim when determining the offender's sentence.

However, victims are not always just people, which is why Bill C-77 also allows military and community impact statements to be considered so that judges are aware of the extent of the damage that an offence caused to the Canadian Armed Forces or to the community.

Finally, the right to restitution means that victims have the right to seek compensation for any financial losses or damages incurred as a result of an offence.

● (1010)

Bill C-77 proposes much-needed changes to the military justice system so that it can continue to meet Canadians' expectations and the needs of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Lastly, the bill introduces a more victim-centred approach that protects victims' rights. Clearly, the bill deserves our support so that we can implement a better military justice system for Canadians. I believe it is the right thing to do, and I hope that all my colleagues in this House will support this bill so that it can move forward.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the House that New Democrats will be in full support of these positive changes, the modernization of which he spoke. Our goal will be to expedite debate in this place so we can review this bill in the committee as quickly as we can.

Like the parliamentary secretary, I would like to say to those military families who may be watching our proceedings today that the NDP, like the minister, salutes them and thanks them for their service in keeping our country safe, both at home and abroad. To those veterans who are watching the reform of military justice, I am sure they would agree it is long overdue. We are here today to support these important amendments.

The one issue that I would like to raise with the minister is to ask whether he agrees with New Democrats that we should remove self-harm as a disciplinary offence. When people who commit self-harm activities or make potential suicide attempts are reported, they may face disciplinary action as a consequence. We think that is wrong. We would like to know whether the hon. parliamentary secretary agrees with us and if so, whether he will work to amend the bill accordingly in committee.

● (1015)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question and his co-operation on this bill.

As I said earlier, Bill C-77 puts victims first. The purpose of the bill is to strengthen victims' rights within the military justice system by establishing a victims bill of rights in the Code of Service Discipline. That is very important to our government. Respect for victims' rights will be guaranteed through the creation of a victim liaison officer who will support them during the judicial process and help them navigate the justice system.

I know my colleague's question pertains more to a separate issue, but we want to work with our colleagues. I can assure my colleague that we are prepared to look at any number of ways we can further improve our system, which is already fair and effective. This bill will strengthen victims' rights. It is a robust bill that will be fair with respect to victims' rights.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his excellent speech. I would like to ask him a question. Bill C-77 replicates our Bill C-71, introduced in 2015.

I would like to know why it took the government three years to bring back this bill, which had already been introduced at the time. I think only one aspect has changed. Why did it take three years?

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I do not think that this is a carbon copy of the previous bill. The former government introduced its bill in a hurry during the last election. In addition, the former bill did not take into account indigenous and LGBTQ communities. To say that this bill is a carbon copy is just not true.

As I said, our bill emphasizes victims' rights and we wanted to include and focus on indigenous peoples and the LGBTQ community so these victims are recognized. We will very quickly implement provisions once this bill passes and we will continue to make appropriate changes thereafter.

[*English*]

Mrs. Alaina Lockhart (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Tourism, Official Languages and La Francophonie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that no relationship is more important to this government and, indeed, all of Canada than the one with our first nations. As a government, we have also done everything that we can to make sure that our communities are more inclusive of members of the LGBTQ2 community. Can the parliamentary secretary tell this House the impact that this bill will have for members of these communities within our Canadian Armed Forces?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

As I mentioned, we want to include indigenous peoples and the LGBTQ community in this bill. Our government is very determined to strengthen victims' rights in the military justice system.

In addition to guaranteeing victims' rights are respected, Bill C-77 includes a provision to ensure that the military justice system considers the situation of indigenous offenders when determining the sentence. Additionally, it sets out harsher sentences for military offences motivated by prejudice towards the LGBTQ community.

I know that this bill is very important for all members of Parliament. These provisions were not in the bill that the Conservatives introduced just before the last election. We wanted to ensure that these communities were included in the bill. For that reason our bill is very different from the Conservatives' bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael McLeod (Northwest Territories, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the bill proposes the introduction of a victim liaison officer. Could the parliamentary secretary tell us what the role of the victim liaison officer would be to ensure that no victim is left behind?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

I have been the parliamentary secretary from the start. I have had countless preparatory meetings and I know that the military justice system can be hard for some people to understand. That is exactly why this bill seeks to ensure that victims are very well informed and able to exercise their rights, including by providing for the appointment of a victim liaison officer who would be available on request. That liaison officer will help the victim understand the Code of Service Discipline and its scope and provide the victim with information to which they are entitled.

That is why this bill deserves the support of the members of the House of Commons. It will help victims have the necessary information to understand the military justice system. We believe that the proposed changes will make the system fairer and more equitable.

● (1020)

[*English*]

Mr. Churence Rogers (Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, how does the new defence policy of our government inform Bill C-77? How does this bill help victims in the military justice system? Could the parliamentary secretary elaborate on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

The defence policy we proposed puts the men and women first. It is focused on Canadian Forces members, people who work hard. We believe that it is one of the best policies we have put in place for Canadians, and the troops support it as well.

This policy was implemented following Canada-wide consultations with our constituents from coast to coast. We also promised to provide our men and women in uniform a more dynamic workplace and the equipment that they need. It was with that in mind that we brought in a forward-looking policy that reflects our government's commitment to investing in the Canadian Armed Forces instead of making budget cuts like the Conservative government did for 10 years.

[*English*]

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the government on bringing this bill forward. As my colleague from Victoria mentioned, we will be supporting this bill and working very hard in committee so that it can become law.

I just want to follow up on the question from the member for Victoria to give the parliamentary secretary another opportunity to address the issue around military justice and self-harm.

What we know is that those who come forward seeking help within the military would be turned in for discipline, should they be found trying to commit suicide. What safeguards are the Liberals going to put forward to address the real needs of mental health supports in the military to ensure that service is delivered free of punishment and disciplinary actions?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier: Mr. Speaker, both the bill and our defence policy put our men and women in uniform first. We know that these people need all the services available to help them understand all aspects of the National Defence Act, for example.

We are modernizing this act and making tangible changes to ensure that victims have the resources they need to better understand the military justice system. We want to support them throughout the process, because, as members know, the military justice system can be complicated and very technical. That is why this bill is designed to make victims a priority and provide them with the help they need.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this morning, on behalf of my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake—Eastman, who could not be here today, to speak to Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act.

As members know, I served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 22 years, as have many of my colleagues on both sides of the House.

The national defence world is a very complicated one. To the average person, to civilians, this is a closed-off world. What happens in the forces stays in the forces. Civilians have no idea. We have our own Code of Service Discipline and we do things our own way.

Fortunately, things have changed. As society evolves, everyone must adapt. The function of the military remains the same; what we ask of our armed forces will not change. The purpose of the military is to prepare for a potential conflict. We cannot act in the same way as civilians.

It is not the norm for someone to learn to shoot because he or she may one day be called upon to use a weapon against an enemy; that is very specific and requires a whole different approach, which is why it is so important to have a strict and regulated military justice system.

When I was a unit commander, I was required to judge summary trials. I judged different cases at different levels during my command. There were some very trivial cases, involving someone who did not shave in the morning for example. That person might be subject to a trial and be fined. There were also much more serious cases, like the one involving a violent fight between soldiers in a military bar. The assaults and injuries made that a serious case.

Over the years, we realized that discipline was important and that people who were caught committing such offences were severely punished through fines and demotions. Sometimes they were even kicked out of the Canadian Armed Forces.

However, the victims were not the focus of these trials. Often military or civilian victims were not taken into consideration because the Canadian Forces were focused on punishing the people who committed the reprehensible acts. However, there was no concern for the surrounding situation. Luckily things have changed.

I want to point out that the Conservatives have always had the interests of victims at heart. The Conservative Party has always cared about victims. The previous Conservative government took major steps to protect Canadians and defend victims of crime. We know that the number one priority of any government is to keep citizens safe, and that is a responsibility that the previous Conservative government took very seriously.

We believe that our laws and discussions should always put victims' rights first. We want victims to have a strong voice, to be heard, to know that they are not just victims and that they are not alone. We want them to be able to speak up and be present throughout the judicial process.

The previous Conservative government made a commitment to make a change and ensure that our streets and communities are safe for Canadians and their families. We took concrete measures to hold criminals responsible for their actions.

The Conservatives are proud of their track record, which includes passing the Safe Streets and Communities Act, the Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act, and laws against sexual exploitation and cyberbullying.

The Conservatives feel that the criminal justice system has prioritized criminals' rights for too long. We believe that victims should be the central focus of our criminal justice system. We believe that they have a right to information, protection, participation and, if possible, compensation.

That is why we introduced the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, a historic act that received royal assent on April 23, 2015.

Former prime minister Harper, former minister Peter MacKay, Senator Boisvenu, who became an ardent victims' advocate after his daughter was murdered, and the member for Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis were involved in the development and implementation of the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

● (1025)

This charter is now the centrepiece of what we are doing to protect victims of crime in Canada. We commend the Canadian Forces for wanting to have a law for victims so that their rights are given the same recognition as the rights of alleged criminals. That is very important.

In addition to the four pillars that are the right to information, the right to protection, the right to participation and the right to restitution, it is vital that the future law on the rights of Canadian Forces victims endeavour to recognize the right of victims of crime. The future law on the rights of Canadian Forces victims must require a military tribunal with gender parity for cases involving sexual assault. This right must be officially recognized in the law.

To protect the rights enshrined in the law on the rights of Canadian Forces victims, the position of ombudsman for victims must first be created to ensure victims that they will be heard and protected and that their rights will be duly respected. A permanent position at a rank higher than liaison officer, which could be abolished at any time, is vital to the enforcement and creation of the law on the rights of Canadian Forces victims.

Canada currently has a federal ombudsman for victims of crime, a position that was created in 2007, but this position is not protected. The ombudsman is not an officer of Parliament and operates at arm's length from the Department of Justice. The ombudsman position has been vacant since November 15, 2017, and the Minister of Justice refuses to fill it. She refuses to give victims of crime a voice and refuses to protect their rights under the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights and ensure that they are represented and protected, the way criminals' rights are.

By contrast, the position of correctional investigator, who looks after prisoners, was filled on January 2, 2018, two weeks after the last ombudsman left. That is totally unacceptable. It is an affront to victims.

I also want to point out that Bill C-343, introduced by my colleague from Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, which would have made the ombudsman for victims of crime equal to the ombudsman for criminals, was shut down by the Liberals. The Liberals are being disingenuous when they claim to want to protect victims of crime, yet refuse to give them the same kind of official voice in Parliament that criminals have.

Creating a victims bill of rights to ease one's conscience is one thing, but failing to enforce that bill of rights because there is no voice to fight for victims, whether in the civilian or military courts, is quite another.

The Liberal government needs to have its two victims bills of rights and its two victims' ombudsman positions in order to properly enforce victims' rights. Otherwise, victims will be revictimized at our hands.

I have already told the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence that Bill C-77, which we support, I might add, is largely based on a previous bill that the Conservative government introduced in 2015. I am referring to Bill C-71, which is not to be confused with the current Bill C-71. The bil I am referring to is from the previous Parliament.

When we introduced Bill C-71 to amend the National Defence Act, those reforms were important because we were focusing on restoring victims to their rightful place at the heart of the justice system. That is why we introduced a bill that reflected the Canadian Victims Bills of Rights and made it part of military law.

It was the result of many years of work and took into account hundreds of submissions and consultations. My colleague said that he held consultations all across Canada. Perhaps the Liberals consulted with regard to the part that they added, but I can safely say that most of the bill had already been developed by our former government. We held hundreds of consultations across the country. The bill proposes to give victims better access to information, greater protection, more opportunities to participate, and improved restitution.

Bill C-77 will be complicated to implement. The three parties support it, and we want to send it directly to committee so that it can be passed quickly.

● (1030)

I would hope that, in 2018, the Department of National Defence has a clear understanding of what victims go through. Victims in the civilian world still have a hard time being heard. As I mentioned, the government still has not appointed a successor for the ombudsman, and there is no protection system in place to help victims. I am worried that this is all just talk. If the government is having difficulty helping civilian victims, I do not see how it will be able to help those in the military world, which is very closed and discipline-oriented. This will be a challenge for the leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces and for the government. The government needs bring back the ombudsman position, give the new ombudsman a clear mandate, and ensure that the new law is enforced. Changes must be made to many mechanisms and to the culture within the armed forces, but I think people are ready.

When I joined the Canadian Forces 30 years ago, the mentality was quite different. I see my colleague opposite, who reached the senior ranks of the Canadian Forces. He is very familiar with that reality. People who join the Canadian Forces today do so to serve in the profession of arms, of course. They want to serve their country to the best of their physical and intellectual capabilities. However, they have a better understanding of the reality facing victims today. I therefore expect the chain of command to accept this legislation at every level and ensure that it is enforced effectively.

In closing, the Conservatives are committed to defending victims of crime and ensuring that they have a stronger voice in the criminal justice system. It was our Conservative government that passed the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights. We support enshrining in law victims' rights in the military justice system. That is why we introduced Bill C-71 in the previous Parliament. The Conservative Party will always stand up for victims of crime. The Conservatives support referring Bill C-77 to the Standing Committee on National Defence as soon as possible.

● (1035)

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles for his long years of military service to his country. I had the honour of travelling with him to Passchendaele last year, and I know of his commitment to the military.

The member referenced the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, which the Conservative government brought in the last session. This bill is finishing the work of the previous Conservative government in overhauling military justice. It started that in Bill C-15 back in 2013.

Why did the Conservative government not extend the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights to those in military justice back then? Why are we doing this now several years later?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank my dear colleague for his question.

The bill of rights received royal assent on April 23, 2015, and Bill C-71 was introduced around the same time. I do not know why it was not immediately incorporated at the time. It ran into some procedural issues. I think the bill of rights was mentioned in the previous Bill C-71, but since it had not yet received royal assent, it could not be incorporated then. A new government came to power after that, so that is all I can say.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for many years, there have been many expectations that we would see these types of changes proposed in this legislation implemented. From what I understand, overall it has been received quite well. The New Democratic Party is wishing the legislation well in advancing to committee stage.

Does the Conservative Party have specific amendments it would like to see to the legislation, or does it see it as legislation it would like to advance to the committee?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question.

Maybe some amendments will be proposed, but overall, we are strongly in favour of Bill C-77 in its current form. We need to take a closer look at some of the details, but at this point I cannot say whether any amendments will be proposed or what they might be. For us, it is important for the bill to get to committee as soon as possible so that it can be passed quickly.

● (1040)

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated from the outset in response to the parliamentary secretary's speech, the NDP is very proud to support the bill. In response to another question for the Conservative member, our position is that we want to get the bill to committee as soon as possible.

No bill is perfect and we have some suggestions of a constructive nature that would deal with strengthening the rights of indigenous people who serve our country in the military.

As I indicated in a question for the parliamentary secretary that we believe the code of service, the service offences and the discipline changes ought to occur to address those who attempt to take their own lives, a far too common occurrence in the military. We do not think that should be the subject of discipline as it currently is now. We think a more compassionate approach is required. Therefore, we will work, I hope arm in arm with the government and the Conservatives, to see if we can effect those changes at committee when we get there.

As a little background, the bill before us enacts reforms to the military justice system that were left out of Bill C-15 from the previous Conservative government, which received assent five years ago, in 2013. It is not clear why the Liberals did not introduce changes earlier to complete the system, but better late than never would be how I would summarize the position in which we find ourselves.

This is a good legislation. We are not alone in taking that position. It was said by Lindsay Rodman, a fellow of the Global Affairs Institute, in the Globe and Mail earlier this year. By establishing a victims bill of rights in the military, as this bill would do, it would mirror protections that already exist for Canadian civilians with one additional provision. That provision in the bill. It calls for the creation of a "victim liaison officer" to help shepherd the victim through the justice system. This is a very laudable step for the armed forces to take and it will go some distance to deal with the pernicious issue of sexual assault in the military. I commend the government for realizing that. This step, although not sufficient in and of itself, will be very valuable in getting more justice for those kinds of victims. I salute the government for such a creative position.

What happens until Bill C-77 is enacted? That commanding and designated officers, with often no legal training, preside at summary trials in the military justice system.

Summary trials are where most of the action is, where most of the offences are dealt with in a summary fashion for the vast majority. These people are not legally trained. They are not required to prepare a transcript of the proceedings. There is no ability to effectively appeal. There is no requirement to apply rules of evidence to assure a fair trial. An accused person can be compelled to testify against herself or himself. Therefore, there is no constitutional right to protection against self-incrimination. Adverse inferences can be drawn from the silence of the accused and the accused cannot be assisted by legal representation.

Those are serious drawbacks in our system of military justice. It did not need to be this way. Other countries have given criminal justice over to the civilian courts in the context of military discipline. In other words, there is no similar provision in the National Defence Act of the kind before us today.

The need to overhaul rights for the accused is as important as dealing, as the government so laudably has, with victims in the military justice system.

Perhaps I can be forgiven if I try to put this debate in a slightly broader context. Why do we have a separate system of military justice in the first place? People watching this debate may wonder that because other countries have not chosen to do so at all. For example, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Belgium and France have removed criminal offences from the jurisdiction of military courts. Their military personnel have the same rights in the same courts as civilians.

● (1045)

Therefore, Canadians may wonder, why is it that we do have this separate system of military justice, and why is it so important that in this bill we move to modernize it and bring it into compliance and conformity with the rights that Canadians have elsewhere? That is a fair question. The answer to that is that the courts of Canada have long accepted that there needs to be a separate military justice system for people in the military. Chief Justice Lamer, in 1992 in the Supreme Court of Canada, said that "The purpose of a separate system of military tribunals is to allow the Armed Forces to deal with matters that pertain directly to the discipline, efficiency and morale of the military."

Those words are now found in the amendments before us today in recognition and confirmation by Parliament of what the Supreme Court has said. Those words were also repeated in a subsequent case in 2015 by Justice Cromwell in the Moriarity case. However, the difference is that the court now has said we do not need to have things pertain directly to the military; there does not have to be what Justice Cromwell called a "nexus" to the military. There was just a broad understanding that we need to have this separate code as a consequence. Therefore, people might ask, why do we need to have a separate code of military justice? Indeed, the charter acknowledges that it will be separate. For example, there is no trial by jury, per section 11 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The charter acknowledges that there will be military tribunals and military law, so even in our Constitution we accept that this would be necessary.

These offences can occur, I remind members, abroad or in Canada. If our military men and women are serving in Mali, they will be subject to the same sort of code in that country, not the country in question where they are serving but under Canadian military law and there is the special Code of Service Discipline, which is at issue. Part III of the National Defence Act before us adds this declaration of victims' rights to that code, but that code contemplates that we need, for purposes of discipline in the field, to have a separate disciplinary jurisdiction for service offences that may be, as my Conservative colleague acknowledged, not offences in the normal course of criminal law but pertain particularly to the need for military discipline no matter where people are serving, such as arms misconduct in the presence of the enemy, mutiny, disobedience of a lawful command, desertion, absence without leave, negligent performance of duty and conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline. That is a pretty big waterfront of things that can go wrong if one is serving in the military, and that is why there need to be broader rights granted to the accused individuals so they can face their accuser with the same kind of rights that Canadians have come to expect under our Constitution and under our criminal law system. That is why this bill is so important and so long overdue.

What would this bill do? Among other things, we have talked about the victims' rights aspect of this bill, but it also deals with a number of important principles that would dramatically change the military justice system. I would just like to make sure I get the wording right in describing that. Among other things, in addition to this declaration of victims' rights in the Code of Service Discipline, there are other things that are added or amended in that code. First, it confirms that the purpose of the code and the fundamental purpose of imposing sanctions is to protect the privacy and security of victims and witnesses in proceedings involving certain sexual offences; specifying factors that a military judge can take into consideration when determining whether to make an exclusion order; and a lot of additional changes to the way in which witnesses can testify, even allowing them to do so with a pseudonym in appropriate cases.

● (1050)

These are things that would never be permitted in normal courts but are recognized as important in the context of the unique requirements of discipline in the military. There is the ability on application to make publication bans for victims under the age of 18 and so forth.

It seems to me that there are some really positive changes in the bill that need to be supported by members on all sides of the House.

For several years we have had the concept of victim impact statements. Why would that not be applicable in the context of military justice? There is no reason why not, and I proud to see that the bill would allow that to occur in the circumstances of military justice as well.

As I said, we have two types of military justice, two parallel tracks as the courts have said: regular civilian criminal law and the Code of Service Discipline in part III of the National Defence Act. The goal of this legislation, as I understand it, is to bring those in closer harmony so that the accused will increasingly have the rights that we have discussed and take for granted in the criminal justice system, while taking into account the needs of miliary discipline as well.

It is going to be a balancing judgment. When the bill gets to committee there will be some things that we may want to address to ensure that we have that balance right. By everyone's acknowledgement in the House, the bill is an enormous improvement over the status quo, but we still have quite a considerable distance to go if we are going to get that balance right.

I will speak to two things that need to be addressed when we get to committee and have the opportunity to roll up our sleeves and deal with this in trying to achieve the best balance.

We need to have greater protection for those suffering from mental illness. In my riding, and I am sure in the ridings of all members in this place, we have seen people who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. We used to call it "shell shock" in the First World War. It is now manifesting itself in so many different ways. People are coming home crippled and wounded, not just in a physical sense but wounded mentally. In the 21st century, we have to do better at providing justice for those people who put their lives on the line for us but come home and often find they do not have the services they need.

What about when they are serving in the forces, however? Will they be stigmatized if they attempt suicide? Will they face disciplinary sanctions because it is a problem in terms of the line of command and discipline? We cannot have that. In a civilized country like ours, while acknowledging as I do the need for discipline, we cannot have people penalized for crying out for help because of a mental disorder, probably exacerbated if not caused by their service to their country. That has to be fixed and we are going to work with the government to fix it when we get to committee.

As has been acknowledged, there have been some things to improve the lot of indigenous people who served in the military. These are long overdue. When we work constructively in committee, we can make some positive changes to this aspect in the bill as well. In the proposed bill, judges are allowed to take into account the circumstances of aboriginal offenders when determining sentencing. That has been the law in the rest of the land since the Gladue principle in 1999, but it needs to find its way into the code of military justice, and it will, thanks to Bill C-77. Is that sufficient? We will suggest some improvements when the bill gets to committee.

This legislation should be understood as completing the reforms to the military justice system that were proposed under the previous Conservative government but left out when Bill C-15 was adopted in the 41st Parliament. It has taken over two years for the Liberals to finish the job and get the bill before us. We are getting there. We have improvements before us.

● (1055)

I am very happy this morning to note the goodwill on all sides to get this right, but we need to be treating our military personnel with the same kinds of rights, largely, as they are entitled to under the charter. The charter does apply to military justice. I did not want to leave anyone with the impression that because there is reference in the charter to military justice and military tribunals, with the charter saying that no juries will be part of that system, that somehow the section 7 legal rights of the accused, etc., are not fully there.

The problem, as we know, is that there are limitations on the charter. The government has the ability to say that the charter rights of an individual civilian may be larger than those in the military because it can say it can demonstrably demonstrate that those limits are justified in a free and democratic society. That is how the military justice system gets to kind of erode the rights that would otherwise be available to members of the Canadian Armed Forces. It says these limits are required because of the nature of being in the military. I understand that, but as much as possible, of course, our goal should be to ensure that those rights are as close to those available in civilian courts as possible.

Mr. Justice Gilles Létourneau, formerly of the Federal Court, and Professor Michel Drapeau, a retired colonel in the military, have written a book called *Military Justice in Action*. It is a gigantic tome that demonstrates there is a huge body of law that the JAG and people who defend military personnel before court martial, appeal tribunals and so forth, have had to learn. It is now well entrenched, ever since we have had a military in this country, that there are these parallel tracks.

The goal of Bill C-77, in short, should be to demonstrate why the limits that are there, the legitimate limits for morale and discipline, cannot approach those in civilian courts. If other countries have seen fit to eliminate military justice in the criminal context and give it entirely over to civilian courts, it is up to the government to demonstrate why the rights of the accused are somehow lesser simply because service members had joined the military. One might say that the rights should be broader because they are the patriots, putting their lives on the line for the rest of us. However, I do acknowledge continually that the courts have made clear that legitimate discipline and morale issues in Canada have been affirmed to require a separate track.

Our job, in short, as we address Bill C-77, is twofold. It is to make sure that the rights of the victims, the declaration that this bill contains, is not simply an empty declaration, but that we can make sure that those words mean something to those who have suffered as victims and, equally important, that the rights of accused are as broad as those enjoyed by other Canadians, unless the military can justify and demonstrate clearly that they need those restrictions on charter rights for purposes of discipline. This bill goes a great distance to achieving that goal. New Democrats will work with the government to make sure that we get it right, and we look forward to the opportunity to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: We will leave the 10 minutes for questions and comments until the House next gets back to debate on the question.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC AND TRADE AGREEMENT

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès (Brossard—Saint-Lambert, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating an historic trade agreement negotiated by our government. Today is the first anniversary of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union.

Exports and imports account for 60% of Canada's GDP. That is why progressive free trade agreements such as CETA are so important.

Canada's competitiveness depends on opening new markets around the world and making them accessible to small and medium enterprises in particular.

CETA helps develop potential trade links between Canada and the European Union. We recently learned that container traffic at the ports of Montreal and Hamilton has increased by 20% over last year. That is very encouraging news.

We put the interests of the middle class at the centre of our trade agreements, and Canadian businesses are benefiting from unprecedented access to half a billion consumers in Europe.

I invite my colleagues to join me in celebrating the first anniversary of CETA.

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● (1100)

ENTOURAGE OF AN MP

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we often make no mention of the people who help make us who we are. Today, I want to take this opportunity to thank them.

Since my return to Ottawa in 2015 and in the ensuing years, these people have become my second set of eyes and my second voice. They support me in what I do and they guide me. Without them, I could not give the best of me. I am referring to my assistants and to my associates.

I want to thank Denis, Guylaine, Thomas and Suzanne, who do fantastic work in my riding. Here, closer to my day-to-day work, Isabelle and Mikhaïl guide me through the grinding business of Parliament every day. I thank them. I would also like to thank my entire Conservative family and my leader, who inspire me to fight even harder against this Liberal government of failures.

I want to thank all these people for being there for me.

* * *

[*English*]

CENTRAL NOVA

Mr. Sean Fraser (Central Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to celebrate one of the most giving constituents from my riding of Central Nova, Mr. Archie Kontuk. With the help of our community, Archie has collected over 70 million pop tabs over the last 23 years. He has been instrumental in not only diverting them from landfills but cashing them in to help make wheelchairs and to use the money for those in need.

As a child, Archie himself used a wheelchair for 12 years. Through much determination and rehabilitation, Archie was able to walk again. He says that he will never forget what it was like to use a wheelchair, and wants to help others living with that reality.

The going rate for the tabs is a round 50 cents a pound. To get a wheelchair, Archie needs to collect an astounding three million pop tabs. To date, he has helped secure over 22 wheelchairs, which have helped others regain their mobility and independence. Those wishing to help Archie can drop pop tabs off to Summer Street Industries in New Glasgow, head to the local bottle exchanges or visit our friends at CACL in Antigonish.

Archie shows us that people can do it and that a little pop tab goes a long way.

* * *

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today is World Alzheimer's Day, a day where organizations around the world raise awareness for Alzheimer's and dementia.

In Saskatchewan, it is estimated that 20,000 residents will be diagnosed with a form of dementia by the year 2020. That is a health issue affecting more people than the population of our province's fifth largest city.

Today, I rise to salute the outstanding efforts of the Alzheimer Society of Saskatchewan. Not only are they on the front lines helping those in need, but they are leading the way in the search for a cure. Last year, the society was active in 302 communities across Saskatchewan. A day's work may involve helping families come to terms with a recent diagnosis, guiding people through what to expect as the disease progresses or connecting people to the services they need. For many, the society is a lifeline.

I invite all members of this House to join me in thanking the Alzheimer Society for their outstanding service to the people of Saskatchewan and across Canada.

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CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. John Oliver (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to celebrate the Canada summer jobs program in my riding of Oakville.

Employing youth in our community truly benefits all involved. Over 370 students contributed this summer in meaningful and positive ways to our small businesses, and non-profits and public sector organizations. In turn, students gained relevant work experience and earned money for post-secondary education.

Over the course of the summer I was able to see first-hand the amazing contributions students were making to our community. I went paddling on Sixteen Mile Creek in an outrigger canoe with student leader Aidan and the kids at Wai Nui Canoe Camp. I practised my French with leaders Kaitlyn, Madison, Sean, Jade and Florence and the young campers at Camp Tournesol. I even learned the Swan Lake pose with Keira and Blythe and the young bailerinas at Balletomane.

All this was made possible by our government's increased funding for the Canada summer jobs program. I am thrilled that so many organizations in my riding participated in the program and so many students benefited.

* * *

RAY GIDEON

Mr. Jim Eglinski (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my friend Ray Gideon recently passed away at age 85, leaving behind his wife, Violet, his children Wayne, Terry, Nola and recently deceased Linda, 12 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren. Ray was born near Edson and spent all his life there. He trapped, and built a very successful contracting company. His children followed in his footsteps. His grandchildren continue to work Ray's original trapline. Ray was a special person, believed strongly in politics and was part of the political history of my region. Ray was not afraid to tell someone when they were doing right or wrong in government.

He had many hobbies, most related to the outdoors. That kept him busy, but he always found time for pranking his family and friends, teasing people and of course razzing the little ones around him. He loved and lived for his family and community. At the back of his land, there is an area he cherished. The landscape is breathtaking. It was part of his heaven, and now he is there. I say goodbye to my friend. He will be deeply missed by all.

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● (1105)

MOON FESTIVAL

Mr. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Monday, Canadians of Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Vietnamese descent will give thanks, celebrating the mid-autumn festival. Also known as the moon festival, this is a time for family and friends to celebrate the fall harvest and to be thankful for the past year of success. Loved ones will gather to enjoy traditional moon-cakes, light lanterns, share stories, give gifts and admire the beauty of the full moon.

Tonight, constituents from my riding of Don Valley West will mark this event at the Mosaic Living Club and at Top Kids education centre with good food, fun, festivities, children and families. As communities across this great country come together to celebrate, let us all look ahead to a future filled with prosperity and good fortune. From my family we wish everyone a happy autumn festival.

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[*Translation*]

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, students across Canada returned to university, CEGEP and college. We can be proud of our world-class post-secondary institutions and our students, who are the leaders of tomorrow.

[*English*]

In this vein, I am proud to be welcoming a group of 1968 Canadian Rhodes Scholars and their spouses to Parliament Hill today for their 50-year reunion. This includes my father, Bruce Amos, and Pontiac constituent Rick French. The Rhodes Scholarship to study at the University of Oxford, of which a number of our honourable colleagues in this chamber were recipients, is the oldest and most prestigious graduate scholarship in the world. The recipients are motivated to engage with global challenges, commit to the service of others and show promise of becoming value-driven, principled leaders for the world's future.

[*Translation*]

The Rhodes scholars of 1968, like all recipients of the Rhodes Scholarship, can serve as role models and examples for all students returning to school this month in Canada.

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[*English*]

ARMENIA INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Bob Saroya (Markham—Unionville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Armenian Canadian community and Armenians around the world celebrating the 27th anniversary of Armenia's independence. After seven decades of Soviet domination, 27 years ago today the Armenian nation regained its independence. Through a history of genocide, persecution and foreign domination, the Armenian people have prevailed. The recent events in April 2018 were positive proof of Armenia's strong commitment to international democratic standards.

Canada has had great relations with Armenia and the Armenian people, and we urge the government to continue strengthening those relations and work together in establishing a more harmonious and peaceful South Caucasus. Please join me in wishing Armenians in Canada and around the world a happy and memorable independence day.

* * *

[*Translation*]

ARMENIA INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms. Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is Armenia Independence Day.

[*English*]

Over the course of their history, the people of Armenia have had to fight for a country to call their own. In 1918, they were able to establish the first Republic of Armenia. However, in 1920, the Soviet Union invaded and took control. It was not until 27 years ago today that Armenia was able to re-establish its independence.

On September 21, 1991, the people of Armenia voted overwhelmingly in a national referendum in favour of creating their own country. In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, there is a strong Armenian Canadian community. This summer, I had the opportunity to attend the Armenian cultural centre's Summerfest, and it was wonderful to see the vibrancy of the community here in Canada.

[*Member spoke in Armenian*]

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● (1110)

OTTAWA-WEST—NEPEAN

Ms. Anita Vandenbeld (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to recently announce an investment of almost $4 million for 42 new affordable seniors housing units in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean. These units are being built directly above the Carlington Community Health Centre. Seniors can simply take the elevator downstairs to access the doctors, nurses and other services that they need. This will allow seniors to live independently longer, so they can be healthier and happier. This innovative housing model could be replicated across the country. It is an example of all levels of government, the non-profit sector and the community working together to find solutions for low-income and vulnerable seniors.

[*Translation*]

Together with our national housing strategy, this initiative marks the beginning of a new federal government approach to affordable housing that will give all Canadians the chance to succeed.

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[*English*]

DARREN ANDERSON

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak of Darren Anderson. Darren and I grew up in Williams Lake together.

From his earliest years, all Darren wanted to be was a firefighter like his grandfather, father and uncle. He wanted to be the best there was as a husband to his beautiful wife Michelle, as a father to his daughters Gracie, Noa and Sofia, and as a firefighter, serving for 17 years in the Strathcona County fire and rescue.

Darren rose through the ranks to become a lieutenant. He even started the fire fit program for Strathcona County. Just 12 days ago, he competed in the national fire fit challenge and won bronze for his age, over 40. Sadly, seven days later Darren lost his battle with PTSD.

Darren loved life, he loved his family and he loved his job.

I spoke to his mom Marlene and his father Gord last night. Still reeling from the death of their son, their concern focused on those left behind.

His friends, his fire family, even the young paramedics who attended the Humboldt tragedy, asked me to convey this message to his colleagues: Darren was so honoured and proud to be part of the firefighting and first responder family. Please take care of one another. Take a moment to ask one another if they are okay. Please, be well.

I say to Gracie, Noa and Sofia that their dad truly was a hero and made a difference in the world. He touched the hearts of all who knew him, and he will be greatly missed.

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[*Translation*]

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

Mr. Angelo Iacono (Alfred-Pellan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, September 21 is World Alzheimer's Day. In Canada, over one million people are affected by this form of dementia.

[*English*]

Alzheimer's disease is not a bed of roses for people affected and their families. The disease is like an eraser on one's memories, and it is hard to see them being wiped out in a loved one's heart.

[*Translation*]

Everyone can use a helping hand in such moments of distress. It is an honour for Alfred-Pellan to be home to Alzheimer Society Laval, which provides support to many people in the area. It is a precious resource and a source of comfort for people with Alzheimer's and their families.

I want to thank Alzheimer Society Laval and all of the organizations across the country for their invaluable contribution.

[*English*]

PUBLIC SERVICES

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people cannot access the federal services they need to live in dignity. Seniors, people with disabilities and in poverty, and new Canadians are frustrated and flooding my Nanaimo—Ladysmith office with desperate calls for help. Whether they are seniors waiting for pensions that they need to get by, worried taxpayers trying to reach the Canada Revenue Agency, or families seeking critical information from Immigration Canada, they face deeply frustrating obstacles the government has failed to fix. Government phone lines are jammed, websites do not work, processing backlogs cause wait times to stretch from days to weeks to months to years, and workers are frustrated too.

I know Canadians deserve better treatment. Let us undo the damaging cuts that the Conservatives made, let us rehire front-line staff, let us reopen regional offices and let us invest properly in our vital public services.

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●(1115)

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's summer of failures means Canadians have fewer jobs, less opportunities and uncertain futures. Part of this failure is due to the steel and aluminum tariffs across the Canada-U. S. border.

Initially, Canada was exempt as the U.S. President indicated this would continue to be the case if our Prime Minister ended China's use of Canada as a route to dump steel into the U.S. His reluctance to do so drew what he had to know was coming: export tariffs. The only card he had? Import tariffs.

The Prime Minister failed to put Canadian jobs and families ahead of his desire to impress China rather than work with our largest trading partner.

One of the steel manufacturers in my riding that requested a remission of surtax said it was told decisions will be subject to consideration by an interdepartmental committee, potential consultation with other interested parties, and require a decision by the Governor in Council to take effect. It has no available domestic supply for raw materials and is not interested in downsizing or laying off its employees. The strategic innovation fund will not offset the impact and overseas purchases are not viable.

On behalf of the economic drivers in my riding, we cannot afford the Prime Minister's failures.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAYMONDE ALBERT LEBLANC

Mr. Serge Cormier (Acadie—Bathurst, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was very eager for the House to reconvene so I could publicly congratulate Raymonde Albert LeBlanc, who lives in Caraquet, in my riding of Acadie—Bathurst. Last week at the Gala des Lauriers de la PME in Vancouver, Ms. Albert LeBlanc was awarded the national prize in the retail category for excellence in entrepreneurship in the francophone community outside Quebec. She started her company, Singer LeBlanc Aspirateurs, over 45 years ago with her now late husband Armand. Her company sells, installs and repairs sewing machines, canister tank vacuums and central vacuums. She says that her secret to success is always treating clients the way she would want to be treated. Her children, Gino, Sonia and Mélodie, who are business owners themselves, accompanied her to Vancouver to accept her award.

We are all very proud of Raymonde, in her role as businesswoman, and of her family. We congratulate her on this well-deserved award and commend her for her extraordinary work in the community and for women entrepreneurs.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that he was uncomfortable funding PTSD treatment for someone who never served a day in uniform and is in prison for the cold-blooded murder of a woman who did wear a uniform.

What makes veterans uncomfortable is watching a minister who acts like a tourist in his own department. He does not read reports. He does not keep his promises. He is impotent to act.

When will the minister apologize to veterans and the family of Constable Catherine Campbell and revoke veterans' benefits from this murderer?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all members in this place, on this side of the House and across the way, will agree that our hearts are with the Campbell family. For privacy reasons, as the minister said yesterday, I cannot comment on specific cases. However, the minister has asked the department to investigate to gain a better understanding of how this decision was made, and this is what we will do.

[*English*]

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a failure of leadership for the Campbell family and for all veterans.

I can assure the member that I know veterans' benefits quite well as a veteran and former minister. There are absolutely no programs or benefits where a non-dependant non-veteran would qualify for Veterans Affairs funding.

The killer's father said that the PTSD came from the murder. The killer's lawyer told the court that the PTSD came from the murder.

How can the Prime Minister and the member stand in this House and defend a decision that is both profoundly wrong and morally reprehensible?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the whole country is in mourning with the Campbell family. This is a unique case that should have never happened. My colleague opposite knows that, unlike the Conservatives, we understand that when a veteran serves, his or her family serves as well. This is what we have heard. We will not deal with this case here. It is a unique case that will be handled internally.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Veterans Affairs misled veterans about lifetime pensions, publicly attacked one of their advocates in the newspapers and goes to meetings with veterans without reading the briefing notes. Now, the minister is incapable of recognizing that a murderer is abusing our system.

When will the minister apologize to veterans?

● (1120)

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what we can do today is empathize and find atrocious what happened to Constable Campbell. As the minister said yesterday, due to confidentiality, we cannot comment on this specific case. A decision was made and we are now investigating why it was made. What I can say is that when veterans serve their country, their whole family serves with them.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the summer of Liberal failure continues. This case is especially clear. Chris Garnier was convicted of murdering a police officer. That is clear. He is receiving benefits from Veterans Affairs to treat PTSD brought on by the murder he committed. This man never served a day of his life in the Canadian Armed Forces. If the Prime Minister is unable to understand that, as leader of the government, he does not need to wait for public servants to make a decision, then we have a serious problem. This is an injustice and an insult to the family.

Is this case going to be resolved right now?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague opposite will join us and the entire team on the other side of the House in expressing our deepest condolences to the family, which has been profoundly affected. It is sad to hear about cases like this one and to see political grandstanding happening over such a cruel tragedy. We utterly condemn the horrific attack on Constable Campbell, and we sympathize with her family. For privacy reasons, we will not be commenting on this file in the House. When a veteran serves in the army, their whole family serves with them.

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, do not talk to us about compassion. We have compassion for the victim. That is why we are here today. Chris Garnier is a criminal and a murderer and he is the one receiving payments for post-traumatic stress treatment even though he never served in the Canadian Forces. Every veteran waits nine months for an assessment of their case and waits even longer to receive their money, while a criminal who has never served has been given money. This case is not confidential; it is a grave injustice.

When will this be resolved?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the family of Constable Campbell; they have our complete sympathy. These cases are always difficult. We understand that when veterans serve their country, their whole family serves with them. That is what I want my colleagues opposite to understand. We will always be there for the families.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals keep repeating that their most important relationship is with indigenous peoples. It is like a broken record. Today, the Minister of Natural Resources said that he would move forward with Trans Mountain, without mentioning consultations with indigenous peoples. The government has a constitutional obligation to consult and accommodate these peoples.

How dare the Liberals say that their most important relationship is with indigenous peoples when their priority is obviously to get this pipeline built?

Indigenous peoples should not be an after-thought.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

We obviously want to get things right as we move forward with Trans Mountain. This means that we must consult first nations communities. We do not want to ignore indigenous peoples, as has always been done in the past. We want to do things differently. We want to consult first nations communities to figure out how to move forward together. This is what we are doing right now, and we will have more to say in the coming days.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, two Liberal cabinet ministers announced a new and improved plan to proceed with the Trans Mountain pipeline.

In the last election, the Prime Minister came to my riding of Victoria and promised to redo the Conservatives' failed approval process. Instead, he used it. Now he is using the same process again and expecting a different result.

The courts just told the Liberals that their consultation plan with indigenous peoples was insufficient, and now we are supposed to give the Liberals a do-over? How can they expect to use the same game plan and get a different result? Now that the government owns the pipeline, how can first nations possibly believe it will be fair this time?

● (1125)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government remains committed to finding the best path forward following the decision of the Federal Court of Appeal and in consultation with indigenous groups.

I am disappointed with the question from the member opposite. At the end of the day, those members expect us to continue in the same fashion that has been done forever. We want to proceed in a different way. We are asking first nations how we can make sure that we work together to be sure that we are on the right path going forward.

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PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, imagine picking up the phone only to hear the government say. "You owe us money." That would certainly give me a scare. In fact, 60,000 Canadians have received scam calls from India masquerading as the CRA. These calls especially put new Canadians and vulnerable seniors in danger. We would think this would prompt the Liberals to act. Well, we would be wrong. The Indian police commissioner said, "Nobody contacted us from Canada. It doesn't seem right." Well, we agree.

Can the public safety minister explain why Canadians have to depend on the CBC to unearth this scam and protect Canadians?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue with respect to telephone fraud and scams has been in the public domain for quite some time. It did not just burst on the scene last evening.

The government has made it very clear that Revenue Canada does not approach its clients by telephone. It deals in the appropriate manner with collection issues. It does not conduct its business over the telephone.

As the RCMP noted last night, the best way to head off this problem is by education and prevention rather than trying to enforce the provisions after the fact.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Salaberry—Suroît, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer is even more preposterous. If they knew about the problem, why did they do nothing about it?

Sixty thousand Canadians across the country have reported a telephone scam run by fraudsters posing as CRA employees. Newcomers are especially vulnerable to this kind of scam, and in total, over $10 million has been stolen so far.

Why did it take a CBC investigation to get to the source of this scam?

If the Minister of Public Safety knew about the scam, what did he do to protect Canadians?

Hon. Diane Lebouthillier (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government sympathizes with Canadians who have lost money or personal information to fraudsters targeting taxpayers.

The Canada Revenue Agency has provided detailed information to help Canadians recognize scam emails and calls and protect themselves against fraud. Every time we hold a prevention or information session, we let Canadians know that the CRA never demands payment over the phone.

I urge all victims of fraud to file a report with the Department of Public Safety.

* * *

[*English*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a new VETS Canada drop-in and support centre just blocks from Parliament. Veterans have access to immediate support, food and gas cards, bus tickets, support from social services, veteran volunteers and much more.

In its first two months, this charitable organization received 65 emergency veteran referrals from VAC case managers.

Why does a convicted, incarcerated criminal who murdered a police woman receive VAC funding, while VETS Canada is fearful of losing its funding in the next few months?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for privacy reasons, we cannot comment on this specific case.

Our hearts go out to Constable Campbell's family.

We completely understand this case, and we are in the process of reviewing it with the department to find out how this decision was made.

[*English*]

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Veterans Affairs said that veterans just needed to raise their hands and they would receive treatment.

Veterans suffering from mefloquine poisoning have had their hands up for years, while doing everything they can to care for their wounded and comfort those who have lost their sons and daughters to dismay, because the Liberal government refuses to do the right thing.

The murder of Officer Campbell got the ear of Veterans Affairs. Why can those veterans not?

● (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we sympathize with Ms. Campbell's family, and we utterly condemn this horrific attack. We also take our responsibility to protect the privacy and rights of veterans and their families very seriously.

However, we all know that the department has ordered an investigation to better understand this particular case.

Mr. Alupa Clarke (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs for a year. Every day, I worked with veterans who were fed up with dealing with the department's arrogant administration, fed up with waiting months to receive an answer, and fed up with always having their requests denied for foolish reasons.

The minister is no ordinary citizen. He is a government minister who is given discretionary power under the act. When will he do something and reverse this ridiculous decision?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all Canadians are in mourning because of this tragedy. I can confirm that the Prime Minister has realized it. We opened a centre of excellence on PTSD, launched a joint suicide prevention strategy, and reopened nine offices across the country that were closed by the Conservatives. There are also 11 clinics for people with PTSD.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île d'Orléans—Charlevoix, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is unacceptable. Christopher Garnier was found guilty of murder and interfering with a dead body in the death of Constable Catherine Campbell. He is getting benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs to treat his PTSD, when he never served in the Canadian Armed Forces.

In their answers yesterday, none of the Liberals mentioned the police officer who was the victim of this barbaric act.

Will the Liberal government reverse this appalling decision and side with victims instead of criminals for once?

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every member of the House is in mourning and sympathizes with the Campbell family. I believe I mentioned the Campbell family a number of times today.

However, we have to respect confidentiality, and that is what we on this side of the House will do.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad situation in our country when the Prime Minister and the Liberals are saying that Canada's veterans need to stand behind a convicted murderer in order to get benefits.

I am asking the parliamentary secretary to put down the talking points, do what is right, what is right for Constable Campbell's family, what is right for Canada's veterans, and cancel these benefits today.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not need any talking points to say that we sympathize with the Campbell family today. It is a terrible situation. What I can say today is that we respect this family and know that when a veteran serves in the army, so does their family. We will continue to support everyone under the department's responsibility.

[*English*]

Mr. John Brassard (Barrie—Innisfil, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's veterans are, quite frankly, outraged by this. So is the family of Constable Campbell. In fact, her Aunt Mandy Reekie wrote on Facebook that Garnier had twisted the system, and she was sickened by this.

The Liberal leader in Nova Scotia, the premier of the province, Stephen McNeil, said that he was initially stunned and shocked by Garnier receiving these benefits.

If a veteran, who murders someone, who is serving in Canada's military, commits that murder, he or she loses all his or her benefits and so do the families. Garnier should do the same. The government should stand up and do what is right.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Lauzon (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our hearts go out to the Campbell family. I know that my colleague across the way would like me to say more on this particular case, but for reasons of confidentiality, we simply cannot provide more information on such a specific case. We will respect the confidentiality of the victim, the family, and their friends and loved ones.

* * *

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week yet another boat was wrecked off the Sunshine Coast. Storm season has hit, but coastal communities are being asked to wait again, despite dangerous abandoned vessels polluting our oceans.

The Liberals' program will remove just 23 abandoned vessels this year across the entire country. We have learned that the promised inventory of wrecked vessels has not even started and will not be ready before July.

How can the Liberals justify to coastal communities that at this rate it will take more than 40 years to deal with the pollution backlog?

● (1135)

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is implementing a comprehensive plan that is addressing abandoned, derelict and wrecked vessels. It includes new legislation that puts this responsibility and liability on vessel owners to properly remove and dispose of these vessels. This also includes funding for the removal and disposal of high priority abandoned and wrecked small boats, including in the riding of Nanaimo—Ladysmith.

We are moving significantly beyond the complacency of the Harper Conservatives on this issue, because we realize it makes a difference in the lives of Canadians.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two years ago, a huge rock fall destroyed the South Okanagan irrigation canal, which is essential to the orchards and vineyards that are the backbone of the local economy.

The B.C. government has stepped up with a pledge of $5 million to help fix this, but we need the federal government to match that amount. Unfortunately, it does not fit in with the domestic waterworks that are funded by infrastructure or the innovations that are funded by agriculture.

Therefore, will the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Agriculture pledge today to meet with me to find a way to get this project out of the bureaucratic crack that it has fallen into?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member for South Okanagan—West Kootenay. Absolutely, I will meet with him in my office.

It allows me the chance to talk about our historic investment in infrastructure in the country, more than $187 billion over 12 years, which will see our government invest across our country in green infrastructure, in public transit and social infrastructure in rural and northern communities. We are going to be the cities of tomorrow and improve the lives of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

* * *

MARIJUANA

Ms. Marilyn Gladu (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with cannabis legalization only 26 days away, police forces across the country are holding off on ordering the THC saliva tester, the Draeger 5000, which the Liberals have endorsed. They are stalling because there is no science linking THC in saliva to impairment, and there are reported problems with the functioning of the device in cold weather like Canadian winter.

The police have said that they are not ready, so what is the Liberals' plan to actually protect Canadians from drug-impaired drivers?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us again talk facts for a few minutes.

First, approval of this device was based on the advice we received from the scientific community of the Canadian Society of Forensic Science's drugs and driving committee. The device that was approved was thoroughly tested by that committee and was subjected to significant testing by the National Research Council. The RCMP, the OPP, the Sûreté de Québec, large municipal police services and small municipal services across the country have begun to use this test. It has been field tested in Canadian circumstances.

This is precisely what Canadian police chiefs asked us to provide. They were met with indifference by the opposition when they asked, but we listened.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sadly, in less than a month, recreational marijuana will be legal across Canada. While the Liberals rush ahead with this irresponsible plan, police services across Canada are saying that they are not ready. I have personally spoken with a number of police officers who have very serious concerns about this reckless plan.

Why is the government willing to rush ahead to risk the safety of Canadians just to fulfill a campaign promise?

Hon. Bill Blair (Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I actually prefer to allow the police leaders of the country to speak for themselves, and so I went to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police. I asked them about their state of readiness. Yes, there are some individual chiefs who expressed anxiety because they were absolutely dedicated to keeping their communities safe.

However, we have provided them with the resources, the authorities, the technology and the training they said that they needed to be ready. I have every confidence in their continued ability to keep our communities safe.

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NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's summer of failure is costing my constituents dearly.

First nations in my riding, including Alexander and Enoch First Nations, are poised to reap major benefits from Trans Mountain. However, the current Liberal government and Prime Minister have failed them.

Today, the Liberals have announced half measures, and we still do not know when or even if the Trans Mountain pipeline will be built. When will the Prime Minister stop failing and set out a complete plan to actually assure this critical pipeline gets built?

● (1140)

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Trans Mountain project is an investment in Canada's future. Our government continues to have every confidence in this project. We are going to move forward in the right way.

The court has provided us a clear path forward and we will make sure that we take the time to get it right, and not rush like the Conservatives would do in the past. Today's announcement is an important first step toward addressing the issues identified by the court, while continuing to deliver the highest levels of marine protection that Canadians expect of our government.

Mr. Martin Shields (Bow River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week I was in my riding and stopped by a locally owned operating oil drilling operation. There are not nearly as many of those as there used to be.

Many skilled tradespeople are out of work. Now the Liberals' failure to get the Trans Mountain expansion built is even more costly to the jobs in my riding. Today's announcement does nothing to get Albertans back to work. My constituents just want to know this. Where is the full plan?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians realize that now more than ever we need to diversify our markets with regard to our energy resources, and that is what we plan to do. However, we must do so in the right way.

Today we have decided to do three things. First, we have instructed the National Energy Board to reconsider its recommendations, taking into account the effects of project-related marine shipping. Second, we will present the NEB recent government actions to protect the southern resident killer whale and to implement the oceans protection plan. Third, we intend to appoint a special marine technical adviser to the NEB.

We are committed to ensuring that the NEB has the expertise and capacity to deliver the best advice to this government. We look forward to having more to say shortly.

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PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Georgina Jolibois (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for months, people in northern Saskatchewan have been fighting for safe and affordable public transportation. When the provincial government cut funding to the STC, I asked if the government would step up. The Liberals chose to answer no.

The government simply does not understand that public transportation is a necessary service for many in the north to see their doctors, to have surgery or to welcome a new baby. Why does the government continue to let down the people of northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in fact, we are investing across Canada. Our plan for infrastructure is more than $187 billion, which will see investment in northern and rural communities in public transport.

I can assure members that on this side of the aisle we are committed to delivering 21st century infrastructure for Canadians that is modern, resilient and green.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the shutdown of the STC, many women fleeing domestic violence have had to hitchhike or turn to Kijiji to get a ride to a shelter. It is unconscionable for a so-called feminist government to know this and do nothing.

Last January, the Minister of Innovation told the House that his government would work with me to look for a meaningful solution to this crisis. To this day, I have heard absolutely nothing.

Maybe I can ask the lone Saskatchewan minister this time. What will he do to ensure that people in Saskatchewan have safe, reliable public transportation?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that I am working with my Saskatchewan colleagues. We want to deliver for the people of Saskatchewan. There will be good news coming.

I can assure her that she can come to see me or the Minister of Public Safety and my colleagues.

We will always be there for the people of Saskatchewan. We will deliver the infrastructure they need and we will work with the province to make that work.

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GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada will soon become the official co-chair of the Open Government Partnership. Next May, in that capacity, we will host a summit of this important international organization. Our approach to open government data is being internationally recognized.

Could the Minister of Digital Government update the House on Canada's global ranking?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Scott Brison (President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Digital Government, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier for her question.

[*English*]

Over the last three years we have made real progress on open government. I am proud that yesterday the Open Data Barometer ranked Canada number one in the world, saying that our efforts are raising the bar, and how consistent political backing has been one of the keys to our success.

Since taking office we have unmuzzled government scientists. We have made ministerial mandate letters public. We have reinstated the long-form census.

We will continue to make government more open, transparent and accountable to Canadians.

● (1145)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it truly has been a summer of failure. The border is a mess. The deficit is growing. We are losing jobs. The middle class is paying more tax. Canada is losing status internationally.

The Prime Minister spent $4.5 billion in taxpayers' money to buy a pipeline he cannot build. Trans Mountain would create jobs and help restimulate our economy.

Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians what the full plan is to get shovels in the ground and build this expansion?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when 99% of our energy exports are to one market alone, the United States, Canadians realize that we need to expand our markets. That is why we have confidence in this project, but we must move forward in the right way. We must take the time to properly assess all of our obligations to move this project forward in the right way.

We will not take lessons from the Conservatives, who still believe that consulting indigenous people is a suggestion and not a legal obligation. The majority of that caucus still believe that climate change does not even exist to this day.

Mr. Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after a summer of failure on everything from trade to taxes to pipelines, business investment in Canada is down, taxes are up and Trans Mountain remains in limbo.

Ontario manufacturers are now looking south of the border to invest because the Liberal government cannot get its act together. The piecemeal approach announced today to build Trans Mountain is not inspiring confidence in anyone.

When will the government stop failing Ontarians and finally get Trans Mountain built?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for 10 years the Conservatives could not get one pipeline built to new markets.

We must have a plan that addresses the concerns raised by the court of appeal. We need to make sure that the issues that have been raised are properly addressed. We will take the time and put the resources in place to make sure that we get this right.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives four new pipelines were built and two of them gave access to the Asia-Pacific and to the Gulf coast.

Today, the Liberals utterly failed to deliver a comprehensive, concrete plan to get the Trans Mountain expansion built. It has been two years since the approval and three weeks since the Federal Court of Appeal said the Liberals failed in their own consultations with indigenous people on the Trans Mountain expansion. Today they proved how little they actually care about building pipelines and getting energy workers on their jobs in Canada. The Liberals have provide no certainty for Canadians who want to get back to work.

They have said all of this before, that the pipeline will be built, that there will be timelines. They promised shovels in the ground. Today, they said absolutely nothing about when construction will start or when it will be completed.

Where is the plan for the Trans—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives expect to use their same old ways and get a different result. The court has been clear and we will follow the path forward that the court has provided to us.

We need to be sure that we consult with first nations and that the oceans marine protection plan is properly put in place, and address with the NEB all of the shortcomings and move forward.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals promised that plan two years ago and have failed, failed and failed. They inherited three applications for major oil pipelines to international markets. Companies invested millions to plan their multi-billion dollar proposals because they were confident that a Conservative government would give certainty so they could build them. However, the Liberals killed northern gateway. Then they killed energy east with red tape and today they gave no details about the Trans Mountain expansion and when construction will start and be completed. Today, they have failed hundreds of thousands of Canadian oil and gas workers.

Simply, where is the plan and why on earth should Canadians trust a single word the Liberals say now?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about 10 years of inaction under the previous government. By failing to build new pipelines, the Conservatives got zero Canadian resources to new markets, costing Canadians billions of dollars a year. At a time when 99% of our energy exports are going to one market, we need to expand our markets.

The previous government failed Albertans, failed indigenous peoples, failed to protect the environment and failed to get our resources to new markets. We will not be taking their advice.

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[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all party leaders in Quebec support the high-frequency train proposal and are anxiously awaiting funding. The only person who does not want to join the chorus is the Minister of Transport.

Even though $11 million worth of studies are piled up on his desk, the minister still cannot make a decision. It is time for action. Canadians and Quebeckers are tired of waiting. The economy, the environment and regional development all depend on this project.

Do we have to wait until the next election campaign for an announcement?

● (1150)

[*English*]

Mr. Terry Beech (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government is taking the best approach to delivering a safe and reliable passenger rail service in Canada. While the Harper Conservatives left VIA Rail with aging train cars, we are replacing those cars and locomotives for use in the Windsor-Quebec City corridor, ensuring that they remain safe and comfortable and generate fewer gas emissions. On top of this, we are doing our homework with regard to ridership and are actively working with VIA Rail to fully evaluate our options when it comes to high frequency rail.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been asking the government for a cellular network strategy for our regions for years now, but every time I ask the question, the response I get is about the Internet, as though they were the same thing.

Access to a high-quality cell network is a matter of public safety and an economic issue. It is part of our daily lives now. The Government of Quebec cannot wait any longer. It has decided to pay for the federal government's share of two cell tower projects in Abitibi-Témiscamingue and Lac-Saint-Jean.

Is that the Liberal strategy, to wait for the provinces to do the federal government's job?

Mr. David Lametti (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our government promised Canadians that we would improve the quality, coverage and price of telecommunications services, no matter where they live.

We began by reserving a portion of the spectrum to foster competition. We also invested in broadband services in order to connect nearly 900 rural and remote communities and we invested in the next generation 5G technology. We will continue to invest in telecommunication for our regions. As we will see, this is going to become crucial to the regions.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lévis—Lotbinière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the former minister of fisheries seems to take his ministerial responsibilities lightly when he is involved in a conflict of interest. He should have done the honourable thing and recused himself from decisions about awarding fishing licences.

The minister cannot claim ignorance of the acts and regulations. No one is above the law or the rules established by the ethics commissioner.

When will there be real consequences for the Liberals' total lack of ethics?

[*English*]

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague already knows that the commissioner's report said that no benefit or preferential treatment was given.

We will definitely not take lessons on ethics from the Conservatives opposite. We all remember the issues around Dean Del Mastro and the situation in that regard. However, I want my colleagues to take a good look at the Conservatives' former minister of public works who was found guilty of giving preferential treatment when he was in a cabinet position to advance his own friend's private sector business. We do not need to take lessons in ethics from anyone across the way.

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me correct the record, because the Ethics Commissioner actually found the former minister of fisheries guilty of providing a contract that would benefit his family.

I can understand if my hon. colleagues have been put up to talk on this and haven't read the report, but they are continuing to absolutely deceive Canadians. Why do the minister and his colleagues continue to deceive Canadians?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to reiterate that, first of all, we have all looked at this report thoroughly because as hon. members of the House, we always want to do what is right. We always want to make the right decision.

The commissioner has looked in detail into this particular situation and the report is very clear that no preferential treatment was given in this particular case. I want to make sure that the member understands that fully and that the process undertaken by the Ethics Commissioner was a full and thorough one.

● (1155)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, guilty, guilty, guilty: guilty of breaking Canadians' trust, guilty of furthering his family's interests, guilty of Liberal entitlement, guilty of breaking ethics laws. The Prime Minister is the first one in the history of our country to be found guilty of breaking ethics laws.

When will the Prime Minister start holding his guilty ministers to account so everyday Canadians will no longer be bilked out of their money and their jobs?

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what a lecture that was. If we want to talk about being guilty, let me remind the members opposite of their time in government when they featured members in their own caucus in leg irons because of corruption. What about the former—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary is just to my right and I am having quite the difficulty hearing what she has to say. I am sure that other members would be interested to hear her as well, so we will try to keep the noise down a bit.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade.

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members opposite, who stand today with these questions, about their time in government. I want to remind them about a member of their caucus who was taken out in leg irons. The former parliamentary secretary to Prime Minister Harper actually served time in prison for violating the Elections Act, and they stand today and give us lessons in ethics?

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[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mr. Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Alzheimer's Day, an annual event where people around the world come together to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, affects more than 400,000 Canadians aged 65 and older, two-thirds of whom are women. With Canada's population living longer than ever before, this number is expected to grow.

Could the Minister of Health tell the House about the measures that our government has taken to help people with Alzheimer's?

Hon. Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend and colleague from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for his important question and his work. As a social worker and as a daughter, I have seen first-hand the significant impact that Alzheimer's disease and other dementias have on people's lives.

[*English*]

Helping Canadians affected by dementia and Alzheimer's is an absolute priority for our government, and that is the reason we invested an additional $20 million in budget 2018. We also launched the ministerial advisory group on dementia. Together, we will continue to work to make a difference in the lives of those living with dementia, including their families.

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SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Battle River—Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal summer of failure in addressing the concerns of small business owners is causing serious harm and driving out investment from this country. The Liberals have been raising taxes on passive investment, limiting the sharing of business income, raising CPP premiums in 2019 and hiking EI premiums by 3%, plus putting a carbon tax on everything.

When will the finance minister stop failing small business, or does he believe, like the Prime Minister, that they are nothing but tax cheats?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Hébert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business and Export Promotion, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is why we lowered the small business tax rate to 9% to help business owners save up to $7,500 a year, reinvest in their businesses, and create more good jobs for the middle class.

Small and medium-sized enterprises account for 98% of all businesses, and 90% of jobs are created in the private sector. They are the backbone of our economy. We promised SMEs that we would help them, and that is what we are doing. We will never stop working for them.

* * *

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Francesco Sorbara (Vaughan—Woodbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the one year anniversary of the signing of the Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement. Could the Minister of International Trade Diversification inform the House of the benefits that this agreement has provided to Canadian consumers and businesses?

Hon. Jim Carr (Minister of International Trade Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since CETA came into effect one year ago today, Canadian exports have increased by $1.1 billion over the year prior to CETA. That is trade flowing on everything from chocolate to lumber to services. By putting the interests of the middle class first, more Canadian companies are benefiting from unprecedented access to half a billion consumers. This is the type of trade diversification to new markets that will position Canada for success for decades to come.

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● (1200)

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Joël Godin (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after the Liberals' summer of failures, can this government help out our Canadian businesses?

In Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, businesses are ready to invest in a new foreign workers co-operative to meet the urgent need for labour and to keep the businesses going.

I am calling on the Minister of Labour to find a solution for this project, which is not seeking any investment from the government, and to respond to the urgent need for labour back home.

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Labour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been working on the temporary foreign worker file for five years now and there are very differing opinions from all the stakeholders. One thing they can agree on though is that Jason Kenney jigged this program up so bad it actually hurt Canadian workers and Canadian businesses. We are committed to making sure Canadians get first crack at the jobs. We are committed to making sure we do not have downward pressure on wages. We want to make sure foreign workers have the same health and safety protections as Canadian workers, but we want employers to have access to the jobs. He jigged it up. We will do our best to unjig it.

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[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Monique Pauzé (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, in response to a question, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources said that the energy east pipeline could rise from the ashes if TransCanada wanted it to.

Worse yet, he said that the government would use exactly the same decision-making process that the Conservatives did. Never mind BAPE, Quebec's environmental protection agency, or Quebec's approval, and there will be no environmental assessment as provided for under Bill C-69.

I will give the government another chance. Can the parliamentary secretary confirm that he will use the same process the Conservatives used and that he has no intention of respecting Quebec's environmental laws?

Mr. Paul Lefebvre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is so interesting to hear from the Bloc Québécois members who, a bit like the NDP, want nothing to do with building pipelines in Canada. Then there are the Conservatives who do not care about the environment or our obligations towards indigenous peoples.

As far as energy east is concerned, as I said, the process is in place. It is up to TransCanada to decide whether it wants to invest. It withdrew its investment and that is a business decision on their part.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Xavier Barsalou-Duval (Pierre-Boucher—Les Patriotes—Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the September 15 edition of La Presse, we learned that the Minister of Environment issued a ministerial order regarding Montreal's port lands at Contrecoeur. Although I have no doubt that the minister's order addresses legitimate concerns, I would not want the government to use the chorus frog as an excuse to block the project.

We are talking about a $750-million investment and 15,000 jobs for families in the area.

I am looking for assurances. Does the government believe in the port of Montreal expansion project in Contrecoeur, yes or no?

Hon. François-Philippe Champagne (Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. Obviously, the port at Contrecoeur is an important issue for Montreal, Quebec and Canada. I am confident that the Minister of Environment and Climate Change will carefully examine the issue; she will have the opportunity to answer my colleague's questions in the House at a later date.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Schmale: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and I hope you will find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: That notwithstanding any standing order or usual practices of the House, Bill S-245, an act to declare the Trans Mountain pipeline project and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada, be deemed to have been read a second time and referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1205)

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present, in both official languages, three reports of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group.

The first concerns the Canadian/American Border Trade Alliance conference in Ottawa, Ontario, from May 6 to 8, 2018.

The second concerns the U.S. congressional meetings held in Washington, D.C., United States of America, from May 15 to 17, 2018.

The third concerns the 11th annual conference of the Southeastern United States-Canadian Provinces Alliance held in Mobile, Alabama, U.S.A., from June 3 to 5, 2018.

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SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and if you seek it I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

> That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, when the House adjourns on Thursday, November 8, 2018, it shall stand adjourned until Monday, November 19, 2018, provided that, for the purposes of Standing Order 28, the House shall be deemed to have sat on Friday, November 9, 2018.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Does the parliamentary secretary have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

FIREARMS ACT

Mr. Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to present a petition signed by nearly 2,000 Canadians from all across the country.

This petition calls on the House to enact legislation requiring convicted criminals who have been prohibited from owning firearms by the courts to report any change of address and this information be made available to police in a database on the Canadian Police Information Centre.

I signed this petition.

[*English*]

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mrs. Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise to table this petition containing hundreds of signatures from residents of Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek.

The petitioners add their names to the thousands of Canadians calling on the Prime Minister to defend the freedoms of conscience, thought and belief and withdraw the attestation values test on applications to the Canada summer jobs program.

Despite receiving signatures from thousands of concerned Canadians, the Liberals have yet to rectify this situation.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, because there is unprecedented global awareness about the calamity of the oceans plastics problem and grievous images of entangled sea turtles and drowning sharks, citizens from Nanaimo—Ladysmith petition this House to adopt Motion No. 151 in the name of my NDP colleague, the member for Courtenay—Alberni. He urges the Government of Canada to go much further than its announcement yesterday and not simply voluntarily include banning plastics from its federal procurement but to actually go ahead and regulate mandatory measures to deal with the disaster of marine plastics.

Petitioners remind this House that this is not a problem that comes from overseas. We have plastics generated from our own country and from our own aquaculture industry on the coast that are polluting our waters and interfering with coastal ecology and coastal jobs.

● (1210)

CANADA SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of constituents who have raised concerns. This Prime Minister has often talked about his Liberal Party being the party of the charter.

In the petition I am presenting here, the petitioners would disagree with that, simply because they believe that section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms identifies, among other things, freedom of conscience, thought and belief as fundamental freedoms. The attestation that the Liberal government has attached to the Canada summer jobs program says otherwise.

My constituents and these petitioners specifically believe that the government should start acting like it is 2018, not 1984, and get rid of this attestation that devalues those fundamental freedoms in the Charter of Rights.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Cathay Wagantall (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the petitioners, who are residents, business owners and cottage owners of Round Lake, Saskatchewan, and those concerned for the well-being of the body of water known as Round Lake, Saskatchewan, wish to draw attention to the extreme low water level of the lake due to the uncontrolled outflow of water.

The uncontrolled outflow is affecting business, the environment, families and the future of Round Lake. The uncontrolled outflow of water on the lake is the result of a disagreement between the Government of Canada and the first nations of Ochapowace and Piapot. Controlled structures and compensation agreements were reached between the Government of Canada and first nations communities on lakes upstream in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The Round Lake issue has remained unresolved since 2008. The petitioners are calling on the minister to use her authority to re-establish communication with Ochapowace and Piapot nations to work towards a resolution on this matter.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

NATIONAL DEFENCE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-77, An Act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Darren Fisher (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the government today on a matter that concerns fairness and justice for all Canadians. I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Mississauga—Lakeshore.

On May 10, our government proudly introduced legislation in this House that proposes adding a declaration of victims' rights to the military's Code of Service Discipline, thus amending the National Defence Act. This is good news. It shows that military justice in this country continues to evolve in the best interests of Canadians and the Canadian Armed Forces, by putting them first. It shows that this government recognizes the harmful impact of service offences on victims, the military and society. It shows this government's commitment to strengthening victims' rights in the military justice system. It is our view that this legislation would advance Canada's position as a leader in maintaining a fair and effective military justice system with support for victims.

We recognize Canadian law has evolved since the last time significant changes were made to the military justice system. The improvements debated today would ensure the system remains compliant with Canadian law and reflective of Canadian values. These improvements would also enhance the efficiency of the military justice system. Our government is committed to recognizing and upholding victims' rights. This legislation would see to that. The amendments in this bill would strengthen victims' rights within the military justice system and ensure these rights mirror those in the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

How would these proposed amendments recognize victims of service offences? Simply put, the legislation would create and extend rights for victims in four separate areas: the right to information, the right to protection, the right to participation and the right to restitution. These rights would be available to any victim of a service offence when they come into contact with the military justice system.

Let me explain each of these four rights.

The first would be the right to information. Access to information is crucial for anyone interacting with the military justice system, especially since most of us are not experts in the finer aspects of military justice. With these proposed amendments, any victim of a service offence would have the right to general information about their own role and about how Canada's military justice system works. As a matter of course, victims would be informed about services and programs available to them. Victims would also have the right to know how their own case is progressing within the military justice system. This would include any information related to the status and outcomes of investigations, the prosecution or the sentencing of the person who harmed them. It is vital to keep victims informed during what we all agree can be a very complex and foreign process. This would only be the first step.

Second would be the victims' right to protection. It would have to be considered in any matter in which a service offence has been committed. It is why this bill would extend to victims the right to have their security and privacy considered at all stages in the military justice system. The legislation would give victims the right to have reasonable and necessary measures taken to protect them from intimidation and retaliation. Victims would also be able to request their identity be protected. This would be paramount in ensuring victims' rights are protected when they come into contact with the military justice system through no fault of their own. It would protect vulnerable participants by giving military judges the power to order a publication ban, the power to allow testimony outside of the courtroom and the power to prevent an accused person from cross-examining a victim in court martial.

The third way this government would be recognizing victims would be by enhancing their right to participate in the military justice system. We would be doing this by expanding how victim impact statements can be presented at court martial. We would also be enabling victims to share at various stages of the legal process their views about decisions that affect their rights, and have those views considered. This would ensure victims' views and the harm and loss they have suffered could be fully considered by appropriate authorities in the military justice system.

● (1215)

It would also allow for a community impact statement to be submitted, describing the harms, loss and overall impacts of a service offence on the community.

In addition to victim and community impact statements, the bill would enable the submission of a military impact statement on behalf of the Canadian Armed Forces when one of its members commits a service offence. Such an impact statement could describe the harm done to the discipline, the efficiency or morale within the unit or the Canadian Armed Forces as a whole. The statement would be taken into account alongside victim and community impact statements. A victim's right to participate before a court martial is a crucial part of recognizing the losses, damages or wrongs he or she has suffered.

The fourth and final right for victims in this legislation concerns their right to restitution. This would ensure victims can ask a court martial to consider ordering restitution for damages or losses when the value can be readily determined.

The new rights in this legislation demonstrate our government's firm commitment to victims within the military justice system. We know that service offences can affect various types of victims, from Canadian Armed Forces members and their families to members of the broader civilian community.

As I mentioned earlier, the military justice system can be unfamiliar terrain and potentially intimidating for many. We want to help victims stay informed and well positioned to access their rights. That is why this legislation allows victims to request a victim liaison officer to be appointed.

The new role of the victim liaison officer would be to explain how service offences are charged, how they are dealt with and tried under the Code of Service Discipline. The victim liaison officer would also help victims access any information to which they have a right. On top of this, if victims feel that any of their rights have been infringed upon or denied, they would be able to file a complaint in much the same way as is provided for victims in the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights.

The military justice system is a distinct and necessary part of Canada's larger justice system. By maintaining discipline, efficiency and morale, it helps the Canadian Armed Forces achieve its mission here at home and around the world. Adopting the declaration of victims' rights in the Code of Service Discipline would strengthen the rights of victims within the military justice system. It would ensure that victims have the right to information, protection, participation and restitution when they have been wronged. It would reinforce Canada's position as a global leader in maintaining a fair and effective military justice system, one that evolves in harmony with our civilian laws.

For all of these reasons, members on this side of the House will be supporting this bill. Through debate earlier today, we understand that members on the other side will also be supporting this. Therefore, I look forward to moving forward on this in a way that helps all Canadians and those men and women who serve.

● (1220)

Mr. Dane Lloyd (Sturgeon River—Parkland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member and the government for their support for this important legislation.

This legislation was largely pushed forward by the Conservatives before the last election. I am wondering why it took the government 76 other bills before bringing this very important matter to the House.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, if I could, through the Speaker, I will ask a question of the member.

Why would the Conservatives table such an important bill in the last days of a dying government when they knew they were not going to be re-forming government? They have criticized what we were trying to do in the first three years, when they had 10 years to do something that is so important for our men and women who serve, and they left it on the floor to die at the end of the last Parliament.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for his great work on the Standing Committee on National Defence.

I wonder if he could talk a bit about how this framework in Bill C-77 connects with the excellent reputation of the Canadian Forces abroad, the discipline, the operational effectiveness and the feedback that we are getting from our allies and pretty much anybody with whom we interact overseas on the great work that we are doing in peacekeeping and international security.

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, we do work very well together, as we do with members from the other parties, in the Standing Committee on National Defence. One of the things I enjoy most in the House is the work we do on national defence. All members work toward a good working relationship on that committee, and I appreciate that.

I am very proud of our new defence policy, "Strong, Secure, Engaged". We unveiled it in June of 2017. It marks our first steps in the priorities of everything we are going to do and are planning to do for the Canadian Armed Forces for years to come. We have a concrete vision, informed by diligent consultation with fellow citizens from coast to coast to coast.

The commitments we have made to our men and women in uniform will provide them with a more dynamic, more prosperous and resolutely positive work environment that guarantees respect for individuals and individual rights.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague highlighted some great items in the bill, but I want to follow up on my other colleague's question about why it is such a low priority for the government. It has taken three full years to bring in a bill for victims' rights.

I am not interested in hearing about what previous governments did. We are here to discuss today's government and why so many other bills were more important than this legislation.

Mr. Darren Fisher: I guess, Mr. Speaker, I could answer the question almost the exact same way: Why were so many bills more important to the previous government than its bill on victims' rights? It is exactly the same answer to the previous question. We have done this in three years. We have been working on it for two. We have consulted. We have gone across the country to find out exactly how we should proceed. We have gotten this right.

I commend the Conservative Harper government for doing the work, but not for dropping it on the floor of the House of Commons just before an election, knowing full well it would die, and leaving it for the next government to do the hard work and heavy lifting, which we have done. We have done this now and we will move forward on this.

Again, I thank the members across the way for the work they have done on this. We have finished this off. We have seen this as extremely important and we see this as more important than perhaps the Conservatives did in their mandate.

● (1225)

Mr. John Oliver (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is committed to strengthening victims' rights within the military justice system. The code of service discipline recognizes the harmful impact of service offences on victims.

Bill C-77 makes two significant changes to the Conservative bill with respect to sentencing. One of those is that it adds gender identity and gender expression as special consideration in sentencing. Could my hon. colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour reflect on that change in sentencing provisions?

Mr. Darren Fisher: Mr. Speaker, for some reason, I thought we had moved on to another level of debate. Therefore, in all fairness to the hon. member, I was moving on and I did not focus. Perhaps he was speaking about first nations relationships or LGBTQ. Those two things were missing in the previous government's work. We felt that those two things were important to add to the bill.

When we talk about amending the National Defence Act, these things will make the National Defence Act stronger and more reflective of the values of Canadians.

I apologize to the member if I did not get the exact wording of his question, but, again, we are moving forward in a way that more reflects the values of Canadians.

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as our government made clear when we tabled Bill C-77, Canada's military justice system is both unique and necessary. It contributes significantly to the ability of the Canadian Armed Forces to achieve its missions in Canada and around the world. However, it must also continue to evolve in order to represent Canadian values.

I would like to take this opportunity to reflect for a moment on the many different facets of our Canadian Armed Forces, including the facets that are manifest in our communities.

I would like to give particular thanks to two organizations in my riding of Mississauga—Lakeshore, the Army, Navy & Air Force Veterans Branch 262 and the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 82. I have watched them both work tirelessly to cultivate an environment where current and past members of the Canadian Armed Forces receive the support they need and deserve, while at the same time promoting a culture of leadership, respect and honour for all members of the Canadian Armed Forces. This is exactly who we are putting first with this new bill.

Today, many of my colleagues spoke of the benefits of the set of amendments being made to strengthen the legislation. Allow me to take this important opportunity to provide context to this discussion by giving an overview of the current military justice system, some of its elements and how they actually work in practice.

The first thing parliamentarians, and indeed all Canadians, should appreciate is that Canada's military justice system, while unique, forms part of a larger Canadian justice system, sharing many of the same underlying principles. It is subject to the same constitutional framework, including Canada's Constitution and of course our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Exactly like the civilian system, its overall role is to ensure that justice is administered fairly and with respect for the rule of law.

Military members are liable for their conduct under both the code of conduct service discipline and provisions of the Criminal Code of Canada. However, the military justice system has a second purpose. It is also designed to promote the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces. It does so by supporting the maintenance of discipline, efficiency and morale among military members.

The operational realities of military life mean that service members are often held to a higher standard of conduct than what would be expected of a civilian. That is because military personnel are often required to risk injury or even death in the performance of their duties, both inside and outside Canada. This necessitates discipline within and cohesion of military units.

The chain of command must have a legal mechanism it can employ to investigate and sanction disciplinary breaches. These breaches require a formal, fair and prompt response, one that ensures the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces reflects Canadian social values. Even though members of the Canadian Armed Forces are held to the highest standards of conduct, they do not give up the rights that are afforded to them under Canadian law, including under the Constitution. However, an individual's rights coexist with the basic obligations of military service.

The Canadian Armed Forces' capacity to operate effectively depends on the ability of its leadership to instill and maintain that discipline. This is a balancing of rights against the need to maintain a disciplined and effective armed force. It is important to understand this when considering the Canadian military justice system. The challenges of the armed forces are profound and are not shrinking in magnitude, both domestically and overseas.

These realities of military life and service have been acknowledged by the Supreme Court of Canada. On multiple occasions, the court has directly addressed the importance of a distinct military justice system to meet the specific needs of the Canadian Armed Forces and its serving members.

● (1230)

[*Translation*]

In 1997, former chief justice of Canada, the Right Hon. Brian Dickson, conducted an independent inquiry of the military justice system. In his report, he concluded that "the need for a separate and distinct military justice system is inescapable" and that the chain of command is central to this justice system.

The military justice system also enables Canada to respect its international obligation to hold members of the military accountable for their actions during naval, ground, and air operations, including those that fall under the law of armed conflict.

Two other independent inquiries of the military justice system have been carried out: one, by another former chief justice of Canada, the Right Hon. Antonio Lamer, in 2003; and the other, by the Hon. Patrick LeSage, former chief justice of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, in 2011.

Justice Lamer concluded, and Justice LeSage agreed, that "... Canada has developed a very sound and fair military justice framework in which Canadians can have trust and confidence."

[*English*]

I want to assure my hon. colleagues that leadership and training are central to maintaining discipline, and furthermore that disciplinary action involving the military justice system is not to be taken lightly.

The military justice system ensures that military decision-makers act appropriately and within their authority when making decisions affecting a service member's rights. Such decisions must conform to the law and be just. A lack of fairness can seriously undermine cohesion, morale and discipline and it can adversely impact unit effectiveness.

While these disciplinary actions are not to be taken lightly, each year hundreds of service members find themselves before the military justice system. It is a system that is used and it is a system that must be effective and efficient.

When there are reasons to believe there has been an offence, an investigation is conducted to determine whether there are sufficient grounds to lay a charge. If the complaint is of a serious or sensitive nature, the Canadian Armed Forces National Investigation Service examines the complaint and then investigates as appropriate. Otherwise, investigations are conducted by military police or at the unit level. With the exception of certain service offences of a minor nature, legal advice is required before a charge may be laid.

The military justice system employs a two-tiered tribunal structure. More serious matters are addressed at court martial where a military judge presides, whereas minor matters maybe dealt with at summary trial, where there are qualified officers who preside. Both tribunals can be held wherever the Canadian Armed Forces are deployed and this is an operational necessity.

Courts martial are formal military courts and they are presided over by independent military judges. These tribunals are designed to deal with more serious offences and they are similar to Canadian civilian criminal courts.

The accused person is entitled always to be represented at a court martial by defence counsel from the director of defence counsel services at no cost or by a civilian counsel at his or her own expense. There are two types of courts martial. A standing court martial is conducted by a military judge who sits alone and who is responsible for the finding on the charges and imposing a sentence if the accused person is found guilty. For the most serious offences, or if chosen by the accused person, a general court martial will be convened where the case is presided over by a military judge and the verdict is decided by a panel of five other members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Summary trials are designed to deal with relatively minor offences. That is important for the maintenance of military discipline and efficiency at the unit level. These trials are presided over by officers from within the accused person's chain of command, including commanding officers, delegated officers to whom a commanding officer has delegated his or her powers and superior commanders. All presiding officers are trained in a curriculum established by the judge advocate general and are certified to perform their duties. Summary trials allow military commanders to administer discipline, enabling members to return to duty as soon as possible.

An offender may request a review of the findings of a summary trial by a review authority. If he or she remains unsatisfied, the offender may then appeal for judicial review by the Federal Court of Canada.

In each and every case, an accused has the right to be tried in the official language of her or his choice and, in each and every case, an offender convicted at a court martial has the right to appeal to the Court Martial Appeal Court of Canada, a civilian court comprised of three judges selected from the Federal Court of Canada. These decisions can in turn be appealed to the Supreme Court.

The military justice system remains a vital facet of the Canadian Armed Forces. It must also continue to evolve to meet the expectations of Canadians and the needs of the Canadian Armed Forces. This is precisely what Bill C-77 sets out to do.

● (1235)

Mr. Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with our hon. colleague from Edmonton West.

It is an honour to stand and speak to Bill C-77.

Today we are talking about Bill C-77 and the military justice reforms from the government. Essentially in the eleventh hour and pre-writ for the most part, the government has chosen to table a bill which it has said is going to be absolutely transformative and is so important. The Liberals believe very strongly in it, yet there are so many other pieces of legislation that came before this bill, such as changing the words to our national anthem and the cannabis piece of legislation, and now we have Bill C-77 which talks about enshrining victims' rights into our military justice system.

I will say right at the outset that the Conservatives always err on the side of victims and believe that victims' rights should always be there. As a matter of fact, it was our previous Conservative government that enacted the Victims Bill of Rights Act. We support enshrining victims' rights into the military justice system. It is why we introduced Bill C-71.

People who are listening to this debate should not get that bill confused with the backdoor registry Bill C-71 that has been talked about in the last couple of weeks, which the Liberal government is trying to bring through this House and unfairly punish law-abiding gun owners. I am talking about Bill C-71 which was brought forward by the previous Conservative government. The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour actually thanked us. It will go down in Hansard that we actually had a Liberal thanking us for all the hard work that we did. We actually did the hard work on this file.

Bill C-71 and Bill C-77 are almost identical, with the exception of a couple of minor things. All the Liberals did was take the cover page off and change the name, which is what we see them do very often with a lot of the good pieces of legislation they have brought forward. They did change C-71 to C-77. They have to put their Liberal spin on it, and we will get into that in a bit.

Also, prior to getting into the depth of this, I will say that this is not my file. I do not profess to be proficient in all the legal terms and all the benefits that Bill C-77 would bring, but I will talk about victims' rights.

It is interesting that earlier during question period and throughout the week, we were talking about a gentleman who committed a heinous crime and through the course of committing that crime gave himself PTSD. He committed murder. He actually murdered an off-duty police officer, put her into a garbage bin and then rolled it out and like trash tossed her aside. Now he has actually stepped in line with veterans, stepped in line before the veterans, and is receiving mental health services.

I receive messages from veterans and first responders every day about mental health challenges. I also receive messages every day from victims of crime who felt that when the Liberal government came in and started its hug-a-thug programs, the process was rigged against them. I actually get calls and messages from law enforcement officers who say that the system is now rigged against them, that it is harder for them to do their job. We should be doing everything in our power to give those whom we trust to protect us, our silent sentinels, every tool to be able to do their job, to be able to do their mission and come home and remain healthy and productive.

● (1240)

We should be giving the victims every opportunity to be protected and to know that when their day in court comes, the focus will be on them and their rights and not on the person who committed the crime.

I sat through the debate on Bill C-75. This is a piece of legislation where the government is looking to speed up our judicial process. We should not be speeding up the process. We should be making it effective, making sure that those who come before the courts get the appropriate rights and freedoms that we all enjoy, but those who are found guilty, if they do the crime, they better do the time.

I will not get into that. I am not a lawyer, but there is a lawyer sitting in front of me. There are far too many lawyer jokes that I could insert here, but I will not do that.

It was interesting to sit through the debate on Bill C-75. I listened to the witnesses who came before committee. They were very articulate and they all said the same thing. They all had the same concerns. They said we should not weaken our system, that we should make sure that victims are not revictimized through the court process. They want to know that they will get their day in court, that every tool available will be there to make sure that the perpetrator of a crime, if found guilty, will serve the time.

Bill C-77 is almost a carbon copy of Bill C-71. There are a couple of changes which I will talk to right now.

The main difference between the two bills is the addition of the Gladue decision into the National Defence Act in Bill C-77. This addition would mean that aboriginal members of the Canadian Armed Forces who face charges under the National Defence Act may face lighter punishment if convicted. I will not say "will". This document says "will", but I would say "may". I still believe in our judicial system. They may face lighter punishment if convicted.

It also would mean special consideration for indigenous members, taking in their background and perhaps what they went through. We have heard horrific stories over the years.

We need to make sure that there is a parallel system and the addition of special consideration for indigenous members that results in sentences that are perhaps less harsh versus their other CAF colleagues and comrades. The concern would be that perhaps that could undermine operational discipline, morale, and anti-racism policies. It may be well intended but it could have unintended negative consequences.

We support getting the bill to committee where we can study it further and hear from groups that come before us and offer their opinions. I look forward to that.

I want to go back to the couple of hours of discussions I sat through on Bill C-75. I am conscious of the short amount of time I have to speak, but I want to comment on this. My hon. colleague down the way mentioned this as well. First, we should do everything in our power to give those who are enforcing our laws every tool possible for them to complete their mission and to remain healthy. Second, we should be doing whatever we can to make sure that we institute mental health components within our legislation to make sure that they come home healthy. We should not be trying to speed up our judicial system. We should be finding ways to make it effective.

● (1245)

Mr. Sven Spengemann (Mississauga—Lakeshore, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George for his commitment to this issue.

If we set aside the sometimes cantankerous politics of a Friday afternoon, there is actually much broader consensus across the parties than may appear. I think we all fundamentally support this bill and recognize its importance.

Perhaps my colleague could talk a little about three particular things that are part of this bill. The sentencing principles are now opened up to indigenous Canadians and also Canadians of minority gender identity and expression. I see the Canadian Forces not only as an incredibly important instrument for Canadian foreign affairs and defence policy and international engagement, I also see it as a place of employment for Canadians. With the introduction of these three principles, it opens the Canadian Forces up more broadly to consideration by recruits across our social spectrum.

Mr. Todd Doherty: Madam Speaker, it is 2018, and as we move through the history of our country, as we move forward, so must our pieces of legislation adopt and adapt. The things we knew yesterday may be different from what we know today.

Prior to offering a more in-depth answer to that question, I would say that I do not know the piece of legislation well enough to be able to offer a knowledgeable and well thought out answer.

Mr. Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Cariboo—Prince George for his hard work, his very important work, on behalf of those Canadians, those members of the Canadian Armed Forces, veterans, and first responders with PTSD. I really appreciate and I think all Canadians appreciate that work.

On that, the member just touched on the issue of mental health in this bill and in the Canadian Armed Forces. I wonder if he would support an NDP proposal to have an amendment to this bill to remove the offence of self-harm from the military code of service discipline so that Canadian Armed Forces members can get the help they need without the risk of receiving disciplinary action at the time when they need that help the most.

● (1250)

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, I am going to offer my hon. colleague an answer in complete honesty. He knows how I feel with respect to self-harm and suicide and the mental health challenges faced by some of our brave men and women who put the uniform on every day in service to our country. We must be doing everything in our power to encourage them to stop suffering in silence and to come forward.

Without going into the details of the bill, because I am not well aware of it, if that would break the stigma and encourage those who are suffering, those who put the uniform on, those who see human tragedy every day to come forward and not fear persecution for doing so, I would be for that. However, again, this is not my area of expertise.

Mr. Dan Albas (Central Okanagan—Similkameen—Nicola, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from my review of the legislation that we are debating today, there is no statutory review within five years.

I do think that anytime we make major adjustments to a system, there should be a proper review. Does the hon. member agree with that assessment?

Mr. Todd Doherty: Mr. Speaker, we should be building that into every piece of legislation because as we move forward, as we adopt, as our hon. colleague mentioned in a comment earlier on, the things that we know today we were not aware of yesterday. As we move forward, we should have a form of periodic review in every piece of legislation.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I decided to join my colleagues today in speaking to Bill C-77, an act to amend the National Defence Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other acts. Throughout the day we have heard some wonderful speeches explaining a lot of the great good that the bill would eventually do. We are very honoured to have a lot of veterans from our Armed Forces serving as MPs who have given some wonderful insight. I want to thank them for that and also for the general nonpartisan discourse we have heard today.

I call the bill the "freaky Friday bill" because the government has basically swapped titles with a bill by the previous Conservative government. For those who are not followers of pop culture, *Freaky Friday* was a movie in which Lindsay Lohan and Jamie Lee Curtis played daughter-mom characters who switched bodies. It is quite interesting that the Liberal government has consistently labelled the opposition as Harper Conservatives, yet it does not hesitate to try to pass off Harper Conservative legislation as its own, as it is doing with Bill C-77. There is barely a sentence muttered by that side of the House that does not blame every problem under the sun on Harper Conservatives. It is kind of funny to be debating the Liberals' copy of the Harper Conservatives' legislation. It is too bad that the government does not copy the Harper Conservatives' commitment to victims of crime.

We are debating a bill that is almost a direct clone of a previous military justice reform bill, Bill C-71. It was introduced by the Harper government because it was simply the right thing to do. We believe that someone needed to stand up for victims of sexual misconduct and other forms of discrimination in the armed forces. It is the ultimate irony that we are debating victims' rights in this legislation on the day when question period was focused on the government giving military benefits to a murderer who never served a second in our military, but I digress.

The bill introduced today shows that the Liberals are following the good examples that our party set by keeping the items that we had in our bill, including enshrining the victims bill of rights into the National Defence Act, putting a statute of limitations of six months on summary hearing cases, and clarifying what cases should be handled by a summary hearing.

The fact that it took the Liberals three years to introduce the bill is disgraceful. It confirms the Liberals' position that victims' rights are secondary to basically everything else. It should come as no surprise, considering how long the government is taking to appoint judges to ensure that those arrested for horrific crimes are not set free due to judicial delays.

We had a a gang member suspected of committing mass murder released in Calgary as a result of the government's refusal to appoint judges. This gang member, who is suspected by the Calgary police of murdering up to 20 people in Calgary, has been set free. Moreover, another accused murderer was set free in Edmonton due to the government's inability to appoint judges. A man in Nova Scotia who broke both of his infant child's legs with a baseball bat was set free due to delays because the government will not prioritize justice.

Here we have waited three years for this legislation to be brought to the House, legislation that is almost identical to Bill C-71 by the previous government. It is not as if the Liberals had to start from scratch, yet it took them three years to bring it to the floor.

I want to look at some of the legislation brought in by the Liberals that is apparently of higher priority than victims' rights. Bill C-50, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (political financing), was brought in to address their own unethical fundraising scams. They were caught selling access to ministers, so they brought in legislation to curtail their own unethical fundraising. Of course, they probably continue to allow lobbyists to pay for direct access to the ministers. Here is a thought: Why not just act ethically and not require legislation to address their cash for access scandals, and instead prioritize this legislation for victims?

Bill C-58 would amend the Access to Information Act, but the Liberals have still have not done anything with it. Access to information is very important, but the legislation introduced by the Liberal Party watered down access and transparency. The Liberals took the time to introduce legislation that would weaken Canadians' access to information and put it as a higher priority than legislation for victims.

Earlier, the government House leader, who introduced Bill C-24, was heckling me about government priorities. Bill C-24 aimed to pay ministers of state at the same rate as ministers and changed the official title of the public works department act. That ridiculous bill basically just changed the salary of certain ministers of state to match cabinet ministers' salaries.

● (1255)

Legislation already existed to allow the Liberals to do that, but they had to bring in new legislation for certain unnecessary reasons. They also spent time changing the official name of Public Works to Public Services and Procurement Canada. They spent days in the House debating that bill, days in committee studying it. How is this possibly more important or a greater priority than victims' rights? It is another example of poor leadership by the Prime Minister and how he is constantly failing our troops. It is just like the used jets, taking away tax relief for troops fighting ISIS, saying that veterans are asking for too much, and doing absolutely nothing to get our troops the equipment they need in the numbers they need. The government is failing our troops.

Our previous Conservative government focused on restoring victims to their rightful place at the heart of our justice system. It is why we introduced Bill C-71, which mirrored the Canadian Victims Bill of Rights that was adopted by Parliament, to ensure that those same rights were incorporated into military law. It was the result of several years of work and took into account the hundreds of submissions and consultations held with victims and groups concerned with victims' rights.

We have seen what the Liberal government has done for our troops and veterans over the last three years, so we are not going to hold our breath that it is will actually move forward with the legislation here.

This can be seen from the Liberals' consistent commitment to progress on a variety of items. For example, they set-up studies and ignore the findings, introduce legislation and then wash their hands of the issue.

I would like to talk about the government's beloved wordplay exercise "what I say and what I mean". The government specifically says "investment" rather than "spend", so it can completely sidestep any responsibility for action because, technically, introducing a bill on an issue is an investment, an investment in time and news releases.

We note there are very few instances of the government actually putting spending in place for any given investment opportunity. In cases where legislation is introduced, we see few instances of achieved results. The government's "Strong, Secure, Engaged" plan for our troops is a prime example. It touts its record investments, but experts agree that the likelihood of its being executed is slim to none.

According to a report published by Dave Perry at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, there is a significant gap between spending allocations and capital spending. Perry writes:

> As a percentage increase relative to 2016/2017, the capital projections in SSE would see spending increase by 98 per cent in the policy's first year, 106 per cent in its second, 172 per cent in its sixth and by 315 per cent by 2024/2025.

These increases in spending are not comparable to any other time in Canadian history except the Korean War. We have pie in the sky ideas from the government on what it is going to do, but when it comes to actually doing it, our troops are left empty-handed. Suffice it to say, while the intentions behind this bill are sound, the likelihood of the government's actioning them is slim.

I would like to go through a couple of other things the government has on the go, things like "Strong, Secure, Engaged", as I mentioned; Phoenix, and of course we know where that is; Trans Mountain, with billions of dollars being spend on a pipeline that is not getting built; and the veterans hiring act. We actually met in committee yesterday and discussed why the government was not moving on that. We just received a shrug from the Liberal members and witnesses. Other items include infrastructure and electoral reform. Again and again, we see the government making commitments it does not follow through on. There is also the issue of fighter jets, buying old jets from Australia so it does not have to take the political hit for buying the F-35 in an election year. It is going to take the government longer to procure sleeping bags for our troops than it takes our NATO allies to run open competitions for their new fighter jets.

While being similar in a number of ways with the Conservative government's previous bill, Bill C-77 is different in some key ways. That is why this side of the House would like to see it further discussed and debated at committee. As with any legislation, especially as it pertains to our troops, we should ensure that due diligence is done, that our concerns about certain areas are discussed, and that the bill is discussed with experts and officials at committee. Conservatives very much support enshrining victims' rights in the military justice system. It is why we introduced Bill C-71 in the previous Parliament.

Victims' rights are important. This legislation is important. Here is to hoping it does not get added to the government's long list of items on its mandate tracker as "under way with challenges".

● (1300)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Cormier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to set the record straight. In his speech, my colleague talked about making justice a priority, so let us focus on that.

We know that the Conservatives introduced their bill right before the last election. If that bill was such a priority to them, why did they wait until right before the election to introduce it?

They had 10 years to bring forward that kind of legislation, but they did not. They could have done something in the budget for the Department of National Defence. As we know, however, they were too busy cutting funding to that department.

Our bill is quite different than their bill, because it includes a provision for special consideration for the sentencing of indigenous peoples in the military justice system. Another provision is for harsher penalties for misconduct and service offences related to discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

Does the member support the provisions regarding indigenous peoples and LGBTQ communities?

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, I would like to perhaps invite the parliamentary secretary to grab Doc Brown and Marty McFly, get into his DeLorean, and go back to the future, because we are not debating what went on years ago. We are debating the Liberal government's inability to prioritize victims' rights. When we ask the Liberals why it has taken them three years to bring this legislation forward, their argument is to blame Harper. The main part of Bill C-24 was to change the title of Public Works to Public Services and Procurement. Why is that a higher priority to the member opposite than victims' rights? Why is it more important to them to put all of this minutia ahead of our troops?

I think the member needs to take a serious look at the inaction of his government and realize that we need to look at this issue now and not spend time focusing on the past.

Ms. Sheri Benson (Saskatoon West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by my hon. colleague from Edmonton West. NDP members have commented during the debate that even with the changes made in this bill, it will still be an offence under military justice to commit self-harm, and those who come forward seeking help within the military might in fact be subject to discipline. Therefore, we are looking for an opportunity during committee to offer amendments that would ensure that the real needs of the military personnel and their mental health are met, and that they get those services instead of being penalized. I am curious what my hon. colleague thinks about those kinds of changes to this bill.

● (1305)

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, that question came up previously from the member for Victoria, and other members of the NDP.

I think it is a very important issue that needs to be discussed. I fully support calling witnesses at committee. I fully support calling veterans who have dealt with this issue, and other experts so we can hear first-hand of the importance of this. I fully support its being discussed at committee, and I hope it will be looked at in a very fulsome manner.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Arseneault (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst asked our colleague from Edmonton West an excellent question earlier, but we have not had an answer.

In case he did not understand the question, I will repeat it: does he agree with the provisions of Bill C-77?

[*English*]

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Mr. Speaker, seeing that Bill C-77 basically copies the Harper Conservatives' bill, of course I support most of it.

Hon. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate and to follow my friend from Edmonton on Bill C-77. It is about military justice and some consequential amendments to other acts.

I want to say that the previous speaker from Edmonton is a huge supporter of our troops and we will be talking a lot about the Canadian Armed Forces one on one in the coming days because of that support within his family for our armed services. He answered a very simple question at the end in a way which certainly the Liberals would not recognize in the House that, yes, Bill C-77 is very similar to the Harper government's Bill C-71.

The Liberals only use the name "Harper" when they have to hide from their failures. They are trying to project that everything going wrong now with the pipelines, with their own abysmal record of putting a murderer ahead of veterans at veterans affairs, is somehow Harper's fault. They say that everything is Harper's fault. There is never accountability on that side of the House. I hope they go back to their ridings this weekend and reflect on that. They have been in government for three years pretty much and they should start taking ownership for their failures.

This bill is so similar to Bill C-71 that we certainly want to see it go forward. We want to see the impacts. There really are only a few small differences between Bill C-71 from the Conservative government and Bill C-77. I should explain to people who are following this debate why Bill C-71 did not pass. It was introduced late in the fourth year of the term and did not receive royal assent.

Essentially, there are only three changes. There are some changes with respect to the impact of the Gladue decision in respect to the sentencing of indigenous peoples. We will have to see how that application goes with military justice because certainly all Canadians, regardless of background, choose to join the Canadian Armed Forces and therefore adopt their ethos and code, the code of conduct expected in the military justice system and the National Defence Act.

I would like to also compliment the Canadian Armed Forces, which in the last 10 years through the aboriginal learning opportunity year, the ALOY, at the Royal Military College and a number of recruiting initiatives, are trying to make sure that first nations see themselves more in the Canadian Armed Forces and important institutions like that.

I am very proud of the fact that when I spoke in the U.S. Capitol building on the recognition of the First Special Service Force, the Devil's Brigade, the first special operations unit where Canadians and Americans served alongside each other, the only veteran I mentioned individually by name was aboriginal veteran Tommy Prince, the "prince of the regiment", as he was known for unbelievable bravery and cunning while he was part of the Devil's Brigade.

While I am on that note, this is how we should approach the modern age. Rather than stripping names off buildings like the Langevin Block, let us put people up today. Let us highlight people like Tommy Prince. Our most accomplished sniper of the last war was an aboriginal Canadian from the Muskoka area in Ontario. The member from that area has talked about him quite a bit. We should highlight people that were overlooked in history rather than remove or erase people who are here from our history. However, that is a diversion.

The other two differences are some changes to absolute discharge provisions between the last bill and this bill and some terminology changes. Instead of a "summary trial" it will be a "summary hearing" and these sorts of things. That is why, as my friend from Edmonton said, of course we want to see this bill go through. This was one of the bills to really bring the military justice system and the National Defence Act in line with modern Criminal Code amendments. That was a huge accomplishment from the Conservative government. Once again, we will not hear the Liberals talking about this, but when it comes to putting victims at the front of our justice system and modernizing our Criminal Code to make sure that it addresses cyberbullying and changes in technology, we were always trying to do that to make sure that the victim was not forgotten in the criminal justice system.

While I am speaking on national defence, which everyone in this House knows is very personal for me, I think the most formative years of my life were the 12 years I served in the Canadian Armed Forces. I left it having taken more from that experience than I had to give for my country. I left without any serious injury. I left before the Afghanistan war. I know people who were injured and killed in that conflict.

● (1310)

Therefore, I feel a sense of responsibility as a Canadian and as a parliamentarian to make sure that our Canadian Armed Forces and our veterans are supported. That is why we are talking justice and we are talking the military.

It is an affront to the military, to veterans and to our justice system that the Prime Minister of Canada stood in the House and defended a convicted murderer receiving treatment.

Mrs. Alexandra Mendès: No, he did not.

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Some people are saying he did not. They should talk to their Prime Minister, because he is wrong and the minister is wrong. If they feel that ministers cannot ensure their own policies are being followed then they are abdicating their leadership for our country and they should resign. This is an affront to Canadians.

Constable Campbell wore two uniforms of service. She was a police officer in Nova Scotia and she volunteered as a firefighter. Christopher Garnier did not wear a uniform. He was is an adult and committed a horrendous crime: murder and desecration of the remains.

Having been minister and having spent my entire adult life either in uniform or supporting our troops through a variety of charities, some of which I was helpful in starting, there is no program in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island for which this person would qualify. Someone pressured the system. Someone made a mistake, and the minister is allowing that to continue. At the same time, we are receiving reports from the department that waiting times are back up. We have a situation.

I would like the member who is heckling me to reflect on this. Their government is having wait times go up for veterans to access PTSD treatment while they are funding, inappropriately and immorally, the treatment of someone who killed someone in uniform.

I hope some of the media are watching this. There are none in the gallery. Had that happened under the last government there would have been 24-hour coverage. The PSAC public sector union would have been outraged and would have been having press conferences. This level of disrespect and incompetence appears to be accepted.

This is from a minister, whom I have tried to work with. I have said good things about him in the House. However, time after time we are disappointed. They are shelving a report on how well service dogs would help our veterans. Then when the minister takes meetings with advocates or talks to the media about it he admits he has not even read the report. He is mailing it in. That is not what our veterans deserve. That is not what we expect when a member of the House is given the honour to join the government as either a parliamentary secretary or a minister. They read the reports. They understand the file. They are not just a TV host trying to make people feel good. They have to understand what they are doing, and I have seen nothing but failure from the minister.

We are talking about the military. These people are recruited out of high school generally, or out of training or college. They serve our country for a number of years, or for a career, and then retire as a veteran. Our country has an obligation from the first time we speak to them about serving until the end of their lives. What I hear from veterans and Veterans Affairs employees in Prince Edward Island, who find this Garnier decision horrendous, is the government will not even acknowledge the profound absurdity of making veterans who are hurt wait behind someone who has PTSD because he killed someone. He has never been in uniform. He is an adult.

I know all the programs at Veterans Affairs and outside. This was a mistake, and it is morally reprehensible. We are going to be here every day talking about this until they do the right thing. The heckling shows just how disconnected the Liberal MPs are from Canadians, from veterans and from Canadians who many not have served but want to make sure they are helping our vets.

● (1315)

There were times when I was minister I said we fell short. We must own it when we have to do better. We must tell them we are listening.

We cannot suggest that privacy concerns means we cannot talk about why we are funding treatment for a murderer. That is an absence of leadership. It is an admission that they do not understand the programs and benefits available. We are speaking about military justice. If someone had been in uniform and committed that crime, that person would not get this treatment.

There are about 10 different ways to show how absurd this is, yet there is an inability to act. The same talking points get pulled out. The Liberals mention Harper a couple of times and think they can move on.

I have never seen such an incompetent government. After three years the only true accomplishment of the Liberal government under the present Prime Minister is marijuana. He made promises about electoral reform and about finances in terms of the budget, deficits and taxation. The only one, and I know it is a personal favourite for him, is marijuana.

The minister in charge of marijuana, when he was police chief in Toronto, spoke to the Scarborough Mirror and suggested even decriminalization was wrong. Now an hon. member, someone I like a great deal, is being forced to come out when doctors, physicians and everyone is upset, and cover that we are going to stumble through the legalization of something that we know causes harm.

Rather than heckling, those members should speak up. We know one who tried to speak up, the hon. member for Aurora—Oak Ridges—Richmond Hill. She became tired of being ignored, of being one of the 32 sheep from Atlantic Canada. She made a principled decision to come over to a side where we can talk about these things, where we can talk about ways to move the country forward, where we can talk about issues we think are important. We do not have to wait for Mr. Butts to issue us talking points from the Prime Minister's Office.

Many of those members should go home this weekend and go into a coffee shop in their ridings and ask someone sitting there about the Garnier case, ask them if it is right to make veterans wait while inappropriately and immorally serving someone who killed a woman from Nova Scotia who wore the uniform.

Many of those members need to get out of their bubbles and talk to some real people. If next week they put the talking points away and do the right thing, once the minister reads the briefings on what programs are available in this context, they will realize there is no program for a non-dependent adult who has committed a horrendous crime, who has never served a day in uniform.

A mistake was made or inappropriate pressure was applied. If they root that out, correct it, I will stand in the House and thank them for finally doing the right thing.

Perhaps it is appropriate that the heckles from the Liberals took me into this subject. It is justice-related and it is military-related. More important than that, it is government confidence-related. Canadians see that waning.

Canadians see a government approaching the final year of its mandate, a government that is lurching from crisis to crisis, whether it is NAFTA on the rocks largely due to the government's own doing, or whether it is Trans Mountain, where, because of Bill C-69 we lost energy east because the Prime Minister cancelled northern gateway. He breached the duty to consult aboriginal owners of that line, one-third equity ownership with several first nations bands. I have spoken before in the House about several chiefs who were not consulted.

The Prime Minister violated his duty to consult first nations just like he did when he violated his duty to consult the Inuit when in Washington he made changes with respect to land and water in those areas without speaking to first nations leaders and by giving a courtesy call to the premier half an hour before the announcement.

● (1320)

It was crisis to crisis on veterans. The crisis really began in Belleville, Ontario, when the parliamentary secretary on U.S. relations, the Minister of National Defence and the member for Kelowna—Lake Country were standing behind the Prime Minister, wearing their medals, flown in from all over the country. I was veterans minister at the time. I was trying to fix things. I was being honest that we had work to do, but we were making progress.

He flew them in and made two key promises to our veterans, the people who serve and are governed by the National Defence Act and then retire, some with injury, some without. He told them two things at that event. First, that there was going to be a return to lifetime pensions. That was a return to the Pension Act. Why do I know that? Because when I was on the edge of settling the Equitas lawsuit with veterans, the settlement had to be turned into an abeyance agreement. Why? Because they were told the Liberals were going to return to the pension.

I had developed friendships with those veterans by that time, Mark Campbell, Aaron Bedard and many others. They remain friends and always will be. They felt bad when they called me and said that they would not be able to settle, but they wanted to work with me and put the lawsuit on hold.

In that promise made to Equitas veterans was the promise to return to the Pension Act. The pension for life announcement was made a couple of days before Christmas last year. That should have been a sign that Liberals were hiding bad news, announcing it literally on Christmas eve. It was essentially a slightly tweaked version of what I had already announced. There was no return to the Pension Act. The new veterans charter is still in place.

The other promise was to never see veterans in court fighting their government. What upsets me about that is the promise the Liberals made to the Equitas veterans, that they were going to return to the Pension Act, led to an abeyance agreement. However, that abeyance agreement expired when the Liberals were in power. What did they do? They did not renew that abeyance agreement; they let it lapse. Therefore, the court case was back on and they made military veterans go all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. Again, the Liberals broke their central promises.

I like the minister. I know he has served honourably. I know people from his regiment. I know people who went to staff college with him. He is likeable. He has to start stepping up. I am calling that group of veterans behind him in those photos "the broken promises battalion". They were called out from across the country for a media event when the Prime Minister had no intention of following through or he did not know the costing and ramifications of his promise, either one of those options, saying something one has no intention of following through on or not understanding the file enough to know the cost or ramifications of implementing a return to the Pension Act. Members should remember that the Pension Act was changed by a Liberal government. Honourable Canadians running for office, none of whom were actually members of Parliament at the time but they were all veterans, and I respect their service, all flanked the Prime Minister, medals on, while the Prime Minister said those two things: a return to lifetime pensions and veterans will never have to face their government in court.

Within two years, both of those promises were broken. Now the minister is not reading reports before meeting with veterans, who are juggling a lot of issues, sometimes injuries, and serious ones. Now we see the waning confidence in the minister fade even more when, as wait times increase. Miraculously to the front of the line for PTSD treatment comes someone who is in a correctional institution for murdering someone who wore not just one but two uniforms for her community and her province.

I want all of those Liberal members to go back to their ridings, speak to veterans, go to the legions, ask them what they think, come back next week and do the right thing.

● (1325)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have before us today very positive legislation, which is significantly different than what the previous prime minister had brought forward. It is sound legislation. We have a minister who has done an incredible job with respect to having an overview, a national policy, consultations and everything.

Unlike the Conservatives, it did not take us 10 years to process it. This legislation has been needed for a number of years. Then the member across the way makes these personal attacks on a number of my colleagues. I am a bit surprised, given that the member was the minister who sat on his hands and did absolutely nothing, as veterans offices closed in virtually every region of our country. If there is someone who should be hiding behind the curtain when it comes to the importance of veterans issues, it might be the very member who just spoke.

We are talking about legislation that has been very well received after a significant amount of consultation.

My question for the member is very clear. The Conservatives like to filibuster on all sorts of legislation. Will they agree that it would be nice to see this legislation pass to committee, and the sooner the better?

Hon. Erin O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, the member would have heard, before I got sidelined with the heckling from his benches, that we would like to see this go to committee. I mentioned the three slight differences between Bill C-71 and Bill C-77.

I find this most interesting, and I hope Canadians who are watching do as well. The Prime Minister stood in the House and said that this was a treatment that should be available for Mr. Garnier. Whenever we hold the Liberals to account for that, they attack. I am sorry, but I am here as an opposition member to hold them to account. That is what Canadians want us to do. If they take that as an attack, it is a sign that they are failing.

In the case of Garnier, which I got into because of heckling from the Liberal benches, nothing shows a disconnect with what Canadians expect of their government more than allowing a murderer to jump ahead of veterans.

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ACCESSIBLE CANADA ACT

BILL C-81—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

Hon. Bardish Chagger (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, though I believe we will be able to find a way forward, because it is important legislation, to ensure that we continue advancing legislation, I would like to inform you that an agreement could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-81, an act to ensure a barrier-free Canada.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

I hope this notice does not need to be acted upon.

● (1330)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the House appreciates the notice on the part of the government House leader.

There will be seven and a half minutes remaining in the time for questions and comments for the hon. member for Durham when the House gets back to debate on question.

It being 1:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

TRANS MOUNTAIN PIPELINE PROJECT ACT

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs (Lakeland, CPC) moved that Bill S-245, An Act to declare the Trans Mountain Pipeline Project and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great urgency for Canada that I speak today in support of Bill S-245, the Trans Mountain pipeline project act. Thousands of workers and their families from the construction, steel fabrication and manufacturing, and oil and gas sectors want the Liberals to take meaningful action to get their jobs back.

As a result of the Liberals' failure to enforce federal jurisdiction since their approval of the Trans Mountain expansion nearly two years ago and their failure in the review before that, as ruled by the Federal Court of Appeal on August 30, more than 2,000 workers were laid off. Another 5,000 more were counting on jobs about to begin in the next couple of months and several thousand expected jobs from the pipeline in the next couple of years. All of these families are now wondering about their future.

That is why I thank Senator Doug Black for introducing the bill in the other place and the 78% of senators from all regions in Canada who supported it. Getting the Trans Mountain expansion built is in the best interests of all Canadians. It would provide high-paying jobs now when Canadians need them more than ever and it would create and sustain thousands of jobs in many different sectors across Canada long into the future.

It would generate revenue, skills training and jobs in 43 indigenous communities. It would provide billions of dollars in new tax revenues to all levels of government in B.C. and Alberta, and pay for health care, pensions, schools, bridges and roads across Canada. It would move the most responsibly produced oil in the world, Canadian oil, to markets in the U.S. and the Asia Pacific.

Today, the Trans Mountain expansion is stopped. It is the culmination of an economic, investment, regulatory, jurisdictional and interprovincial crisis of confidence in Canada that has been escalating for years, perpetuated by the Liberals.

Failure is not an option. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce president Perrin Beatty said failure would send "a profoundly negative message to investors both here at home and around the world about Canada's regulatory system and our ability to get things done".

Uncertainty caused by anti-energy policies and messages from the Liberals has already done so much damage, caused so many job losses and driven billions out of Canada. Every day of delay on the Trans Mountain expansion makes it worse. That is why all members of Parliament should support the bill.

For months, Liberals repeated they would not accept undue or "unnecessary delays" without ever defining them, that "no province can impinge on the national interest", but never actually did anything; that "we are considering all options" which is, mind boggling, and what they are still saying, the pipeline "will be built", but construction never actually started, despite the photo ops and press conferences.

Senator Black tabled the bill on February 15. On April 8, Kinder Morgan halted work and set a deadline for clear assurances from the Liberals that ongoing roadblocks and delays would be removed so it could proceed. On April 10, cabinet had an emergency meeting, after which ministers gave media 97 seconds of platitudes and left.

On April 16 the Prime Minister and other ministers were widely quoted saying the Liberals would introduce legislation imminently to "reassert and reinforce" federal authority over the Trans Mountain expansion. The Prime Minister failed to deliver the legislation he promised and this week he mocked the idea.

On May 22, a week before Kinder Morgan's deadline, the Senate passed Bill S-245. Between May 22 and May 31 the Bloc, the NDP and then the Liberals denied my three separate asks to get unanimous consent to expedite this bill for debate in the House so MPs could give the certainty requested by Kinder Morgan and they denied it yet again today.

Then the Liberals announced the federal government would purchase the Trans Mountain pipeline and the Minister of Finance said, "If Kinder Morgan is not interested in building the project, we think plenty of investors would be interested in taking on this project". That was shocking in itself since Kinder Morgan had already worked for years to prepare for its $7.4-billion investment and had already spent hundreds of millions, while meeting hundreds of conditions and fighting to build it for 17 months since the Liberals' official approval; manifestly not a lack of interest.

Then, of course, the Finance Minister failed to find a single other investor or buyer, while he also promised "to guarantee the summer construction season for the workers who are counting on it, and to ensure the project is built to completion in a timely fashion".

On July 31, the current Minister of Natural Resources announced the start of construction at a press conference where the head of the now government-owned Trans Mountain Corporation clarified immediately that new pipeline would not actually start getting in the ground until "early next year". Then, on August 30, the day the $4.5-billion purchase was completed, which divested Kinder Morgan from Canada, the Federal Court of Appeal ruled that the Liberals had failed to adequately consult first nations in the process they initiated, oversaw and managed, during their review of Trans Mountain's regulatory application in 2016, before they approved it, which they have assured Canadians all along would ensure the Trans Mountain expansion could be built.

● (1335)

As always, the Liberals are blaming everyone and everything else for all their failures.

The court decision is clear, and the context is important. In June 2014, the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling on the duty to consult indigenous people on project development.

In June 2016, three months after the Liberals were elected, the approval of northern gateway was overturned by the Federal Court of Appeal. However, instead of trying to fulfill the measures in the court ruling through new consultations with first nations, especially in light of the 31 indigenous agreements supporting northern gateway worth $2 billion at stake, to enable that major, crucial export infrastructure to proceed, and to get it right for future proposals, the Prime Minister vetoed it outright and completely.

For the Trans Mountain expansion application, which along with all others had been frozen by the Liberals since January, the Minister of Natural Resources appointed a three member ministerial panel to consult with first nations on May 27, 2016, which reported back in November 2016, and the federal cabinet approved the Trans Mountain expansion in the national interest on the 30th of that month.

When multiple legal challenges and protests started immediately, the Liberals assured all Canadians that their review and approval would withstand a court challenge and they specifically cited the ruling on northern gateway as the impetus for their process that they claimed would guarantee the Trans Mountain expansion would proceed.

However, the Federal Court of Appeal said the Liberals' consultation with first nations on Trans Mountain between May and November 2016 "fell well short of the minimum requirements". It confirms a total failure of meaningful two-way engagement while misleading participants and a failure to attempt accommodation by the Liberals with first nations. It is just the latest in a long pattern of the Liberals saying one thing and doing another.

The other major part of the ruling is the consideration of the impact of tanker traffic on orca whales. What is galling is the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans said he would come back to cabinet "with precise regulatory elements that will ensure that we have mitigated the effect of the noise, and things like access to prey—chinook management—and (ensure) land-based pollutants that contaminate certain bodies of water in which these whales are resident are reduced and/or eliminated". This was at the same time as the Liberal approval of Trans Mountain.

The minister then failed to introduce any of it, denying a key defence for the Liberals' approval, because of yet another failure. The minister should have been on top of it and prepared, because the fact is the risk is not exclusive to Trans Mountain. He, himself, on September 12, said:

> You have to put this in context. The noise from a container ship is no different than the noise from an oil tanker. And there are between 3,000 and 3,500 container ships that come into the Port of Vancouver. There are thousands of BC Ferries, and there are tens of thousands of recreational boaters out there. So if you are going to save these whales, the mitigation has to be much broader than a few more oil tankers. It has to relate to how we're managing shipping generally.

That is what the minister said, and he failed to do anything about it.

As of today, the Liberals have still failed to provide a comprehensive plan and even blocked the mutual requests of Conservative and NDP MPs for emergency meetings of both the natural resources and indigenous and northern affairs committees for ministers to explain their failures on the Trans Mountain review, to answer for the 4.5 billion tax dollars they spent, and to account to the pipeline's owners—all Canadians—their next steps to get the expansion back on track.

Western Canadians are angry, frustrated, and they feel betrayed by the Liberals. The majority of Canadians across the country who resoundingly support the Trans Mountain expansion are losing hope. It is no wonder why, when the Prime Minister said that Canada should phase out the oil sands and that he regrets Canada cannot get off oil tomorrow, and he defended tax dollars going to summer jobs explicitly for activists to stop the Kinder Morgan pipeline and tanker project.

What is especially disappointing is the way the Prime Minister and the Liberals' failures are sacrificing the best and national interests of Canadians to obstructionist activities initiated and funded to serve the national and competitive ambitions of other countries and Canada's competitors.

The Financial Post, the Vancouver Sun, The Globe and Mail, and multiple other media outlets have reported on a leaked document dubbed the Kinder Morgan "Action Hive Proposal", penned by 350.org, a foreign anti-oil protest group, which outlines a strategy by an anti-energy coalition to block the Trans Mountain expansion.

The Financial Post revealed that Tides Canada "has granted $40 million to 100 Canadian anti-pipeline organizations", which in turn fight to stop Canadian energy development and access to export markets.

● (1340)

In 2016, Tides Canada quietly shut down its international donation matching system that allowed U.S. donors to donate to the Canadian foundation but still receive a tax receipt for the U.S. foundation.

On September 12, it was reported that since 2014, the City of Burnaby spent $1.12 million in legal costs to fight the Trans Mountain expansion.

The only objective of these efforts is to stop the pipeline altogether through "death by delay", using every tool in their tool box, as they said they would. It is not to achieve a reasonable, evidence-based conclusion in the broad best interests of all Canadians, and nothing will ever earn a so-called "social license" from it. This is why every MP needs to vote for this legislation, for Canada.

The purpose of Bill S-245 is to declare the Trans Mountain pipeline project and all related works to be for the general advantage of Canada, a declaratory power that has been used more than 450 times before to enable major approved infrastructure like bridges, railways and electricity. Once the power is used and affirmed by Parliament, all secondary works and everything related to the construction of the pipeline, including all local roads, bridges, power connections, the terminal and its ongoing operation and maintenance, will be in federal jurisdiction. This is important, given existing threats to attempt to restrict the volume in the expansion even if it ever gets built.

This is an important preventative measure. The City of Burnaby said that there was still possible challenges going ahead. The B.C. NDP talks about attempting to restrict that flow for future B.C. governments. Therefore, the bill would mitigate future obstructionist attempts by other levels of governments and clarify challenges and disagreements over jurisdiction, providing certainty that there would be no further successful impediments to the project's completion.

It would also give a strong signal to the private sector that Canada would enforce the division of powers, jurisdictional rights and responsibilities, and stand up for Canada's national interest with real action to give certainty that when an approval and permits were granted in Canada it actually would mean something.

Some have questioned the need for this bill and said that Trans Mountain is already federal jurisdiction. As Senator Black made clear in his statements, in order to utilize the provisions that would place all of Trans Mountain's secondary works under federal jurisdiction, there must be an explicit declaration. It cannot simply be implied that a work is for the general advantage of Canada.

This has been done in legislation four times: the Detroit River Canadian Bridge Company Act of 1928; the Hudson Bay Mining declaration of 1947; the Quebec North Shore and Labrador Railway of 1947; and an act respecting CN Rail, which provided the amalgam of rail companies that formed CN Rail in 1955. In each of those pieces of legislation, there is an express declaration, and these are only four examples, that this work is for the general advantage of Canada. This is why Parliament needs to declare Trans Mountain to be for the general advantage of Canada, to reinforce federal jurisdiction.

The reality is that the Liberals had opportunities to pass this bill quickly this spring to avoid having to spend $4.5 billion on the Trans Mountain pipeline, which will go to build pipelines in the United States. They blocked that at every attempt. They voted against two motions this spring, calling for the Liberals to share their plan for getting Trans Mountain built. Most recently, they used their majority to block two parliamentary committees from getting the answers Canadians were demanding.

Since they formed government, the Liberals have failed to give industry the certainty they require to invest in large projects; failed to get construction going on the Trans Mountain expansion this summer, which they promised; failed to find another buyer for the existing Trans Mountain pipeline; failed to consult first nations adequately, leading to months or years of project delays, and putting all the indigenous mutual benefit agreements at risk; and failed to deliver the legislation they promised in the spring to get this pipeline built.

I hear from Canadians that they cannot trust the Liberals to deliver because their actions do not match their words, which is why the Liberals must clearly demonstrate their support for the Trans Mountain expansion today, through action, by passing this legislation. As well, they must tell Canadians the other concrete next steps they will take to get the Trans Mountain expansion built.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada, and particularly the Prime Minister, has been very clear in all regions of our country just how important the Trans Mountain project is to the nation. We have seen forward movement for a long time now. On the one hand, we have New Democrats who believe we do not need the pipelines. I am starting to believe the Conservatives are hoping it does not get off the ground so they can continue to be critical of the government. This seems to be the priority of the Conservatives.

The Prime Minister, ministers, members from Alberta as well as myself have been consistent throughout with respect to that sense of commitment, that we continue to move forward with Trans Mountain, yet the Conservatives were never able to get a pipeline built across the mountains.

Why should Canadians believe the Conservatives could do better than they did in 10 years when they were not able to do anything? We have a Prime Minister and government actually moving forward. If that meant buying, we bought.

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, they blew $4.5 billion, which was not actually for the purchase of a pipeline, but the purchase of existing assets, and they have no plan for the expansion. Kinder Morgan has said very clearly that it is going to divest all its assets in Canada. What that means is that the Liberals have given $4.5 billion in Canadian tax dollars to the U.S. to build pipelines to compete with Canada as our now major energy competitor, while Canada still relies on the U.S. to be our number one energy customer.

The Liberals have to give up their narrative about the previous government, because all it does is expose their lack of a plan for the future and their inability to answer for failure after failure. Four new pipelines were built under the Conservative government. Two of those achieved improved access, one to the Asia-Pacific, the Anchor Loop by expanding access to the Trans Mountain pipeline, and another, Keystone, by getting oil to the Gulf coast. Billions of new barrels of oil are rolling through pipelines that Conservatives approved. As of right now, the Liberals have built none, and have added zero to Canada's export—

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member has spoken about her desire to get this place to declare this particular pipeline to be to the general advantage of Canada. The Prime Minister has said it will be built. I know the member shares our concern for fairness and justice in this process. I am getting questions from indigenous leaders and coastal communities, like mine in Victoria, who fear the potential environmental consequences of a catastrophic spill of diluted bitumen. I want to know how I can answer them, and perhaps the member can help me, when they ask how the Government of Canada can regulate this, make the final decision, and be the owner of this particular pipeline and pipeline project, and yet treat those people fairly. How can that work?

Mrs. Shannon Stubbs: Mr. Speaker, 43 indigenous communities had secured mutual benefit agreements with the Trans Mountain expansion through years of work. Every indigenous community involved in those agreements supports it and wants to see it go ahead. However, this is yet another failure by the Liberals. On the same day they announced their approval of the Trans Mountain expansion, the fisheries minister at that time said he would return with a comprehensive plan to mitigate risk in the area, to better manage the habitat and feedstock of orca whales and to enhance both prevention and mitigation of additional vessels. The conclusions were clearly that the number of vessels and traffic in that area would continue to increase. There are thousands of vessels there in addition to the one tanker a day that would be added as a result of the Trans Mountain expansion.

The Liberals' other failure, to actually deliver on their promise in addition to their approval of the Trans Mountain expansion, is exactly why constituents like his are questioning this.

It is also helpful to correct the facts on the pipeline. It does not transport raw bitumen. It is actually unique as a pipeline. It is able to transport diluted bitumen instead of crude oil, and a number of other upgraded and refined petroleum products.

● (1350)

Mr. Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill S-245 at second reading and to do so as a proud Alberta MP. I am very proud of my home province and my city of Edmonton. It is a place that values hard work and entrepreneurship. In fact, if people come to my riding of Edmonton Centre, they will see on one of the buildings there a huge mural that says, "Take a risk". There is nothing more Edmontonian that anyone could possibly do. It is a place that celebrates inclusion, a place that believes everyone should have the opportunity to succeed. The Edmonton Metropolitan Region has brought innovation and resource development to new levels, once thought impossible.

Members may know that I grew up in Morinville. Close members of my family and dear friends work and have worked in the oil sands, and I know first-hand the importance of resource development to people's lives and livelihoods. I agree categorically with what I hear at doors every week, the keen and deep interest in getting our resources to market and ending the $15-billion-a-year haircut that our resource products get because we have only one customer, the United States.

These are the same reasons that our government approved the Trans Mountain expansion project in the first place. We know that this project holds the potential to create thousands of good middle-class jobs, to strengthen the Canadian economy and generate billions of dollars in new revenues for all orders of government, and to ensure that we get a fair price for one of our country's most valuable resources. It would also open up new opportunities in indigenous communities across B.C. and Alberta, which support the project. There are also 43 indigenous communities that have signed mutual benefit agreements.

It is for all of these reasons and many more that we believe that the TMX project is in Canada's national interest and why we purchased its assets as a sound investment in Canada's future. The existing line will generate $300 million in earnings every year regardless of the expansion. Therefore, when legislation comes before us suggesting that, "the Trans Mountain Pipeline Project and related works [are declared] to be for the general advantage of Canada", it is hard to disagree. We have said as much repeatedly in every part of the country, and yet it is not enough that the pipeline project expansion proceed. It must proceed in the right way, and that includes fulfilling our government's commitments to protecting the environment and renewing Canada's relationship with indigenous peoples.

The Trans Mountain expansion project is in the situation it is in today because of the failures of the previous Conservative government. We promised legislation that would move Canada forward and brings more, not less, environmental protection and respect for indigenous rights. Have the Conservatives learned that lesson? No. Despite court ruling after court ruling, they still fail to understand the importance of having strong and meaningful frameworks for pipeline approval in place. Ten years of Conservative failure to get our energy to other markets does not serve the Canadian people and does not serve the energy industry.

With Bill C-69, our government will move Canada's projects forward based on doing things the right way, and without cutting corners the way Conservatives did for a decade. When will the Conservatives learn that Canada cannot legislate its way out of its constitutional obligation to consult indigenous peoples and to protect the environment? Only they know the answer to that. On this side, we know that cutting corners has not worked in the past and will not work now or in the future.

The Federal Court of Appeal found that the government's assessment of the project left room for improvement. Potential environmental effects of marine shipping were not properly considered by the NEB, which was a result of a flawed process created by the Conservatives. It also found that while we had an acceptable framework for indigenous consultation, one that we brought forward in our interim approach to environmental assessments, the Crown did not properly execute that phase of the process.

That is why today the Minister of Natural Resources announced an important step in our path forward. He said that the government has instructed the National Energy Board to reconsider its recommendation, taking into account the effects of marine shipping related to the project. We will be directing the NEB to report within 22 weeks. During this time, the NEB will hear from Canadians and provide participant funding for indigenous and non-indigenous groups. We will present to the NEB recent government actions to protect the southern resident killer whales and to implement the oceans protection plan. We are committed to ensuring that the National Energy Board has the expertise and capacity to deliver the best advice to the government. To that end, we intend to appoint a special marine technical advisor to the National Energy Board.

● (1355)

Our government has been clear about its vision for resource development, a vision built on three key tenets: creating good, middle-class jobs; protecting the environment; and indigenous partnerships.

We see the Trans Mountain expansion project as part of this vision, but the vision is much bigger than that. We are committed to building a long-term energy vision for Canadians, one that transitions Canada to a clean growth economy. Canada is now a global leader in clean tech and we are poised to be a clean energy leader as well.

We have worked across sectors and across the country to build Bill C-69, with industry and environmental groups. The bill moves past the Conservative way of ignoring indigenous peoples and the environment, and proposes a modern, new way to review major resource projects and a new framework to recognize and implement indigenous rights in a spirit of respect, co-operation and collaboration.

Our vision is of more than a single pipeline. It is about creating jobs for Canadians and charting a path for Canada's long-term future, a new course that recognizes that the economy and the environment must go hand in hand.

The Federal Court of Appeal confirmed that we had made a solid start with the interim principles we introduced back in January 2016, but it said there was more work to be done. We understand that. That has been our focus since we formed government in November 2015.

That is why we not only signed the Paris Agreement on climate change, but also helped shape it as an ambitious and balanced plan for ensuring that the environment and economy are equal components of a single engine that will drive enduring prosperity.

That is why we also sat down with the provinces, territories, and indigenous peoples to draft the pan-Canadian framework on clean growth and climate change, a blueprint for reducing emissions, spurring innovation, adapting to climate change and creating good middle-class jobs across the country.

[*Translation*]

That is why we are making long-term investments in clean technology and green infrastructure. That is why we are providing unprecedented levels of support for science and basic research. That is also why we are making a historic investment to protect Canada's oceans, marine life and coastal communities.

The $1.5-billion oceans protection plan will strengthen the eyes and ears of the Canadian Coast Guard, enhance our response capabilities in the unlikely event of a spill and support innovative marine research. It will also reinforce new important partnerships with indigenous peoples. That includes the joint creation of an indigenous advisory and oversight committee to assess the safety of the TMX project throughout its life cycle.

This is in addition to our efforts to improve indigenous peoples's access to financing for economic development, professional training and business opportunities arising from the pipeline expansion. We recognize the importance of Canada's energy sector and its impact on both Canada's economy and the environment.

The Trans Mountain expansion project is a key element, part of a common-sense approach that includes the diversification of our energy markets, the improvement of environmental safety and the creation of thousands of good jobs for the middle class, including good jobs for indigenous communities.

However, we have to do this properly, by keeping our commitments to reconciliation with indigenous peoples and to environmental protection, and as part of our plan to build a better future and a better Canada for everyone. That is what I am proud to support today.

[*English*]

The Conservative Party can continue to attempt to mystify Canadians with bafflegab, blather and blarney. Our government will do the right thing and be respectful, rigorous and get this done in the right way.

Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I oppose the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion of the TMX pipeline, and I have since 2011. It would boost bitumen oil shipments through the Salish Sea in my riding from once a week to once a day through sensitive ecology that cannot handle a spill. That is all downside and no upside for B.C.'s coast, and it is not in the national interest. Therefore, I and the New Democrats oppose Bill S-245.

Since the Liberals announced that they are buying the TMX pipeline, I have had more input from constituents on this issue than anything else. B.C. people are telling me they feel betrayed by the Prime Minister. They are dismayed the Liberal priorities are so stuck in the past. They are angry that the Prime Minister has bailed out a Texas oil company with a massive payout, to assume onto taxpayers a risk that the corporate interest was unwilling to assume, and dump all the financial and environmental risk onto Canadians. This is all about the future of our country and our environment.

Here is a fast reality check on some of the rationale out there. There is already a pipeline to tidewater. There is no demonstrated market overseas for bitumen and dilbit, and there is no price differential. Even if there was, exporting raw dilbit would be exporting the good jobs that could go with refining and adding value, the jobs the government has said it is trying to protect.

Solid bitumen eliminates the need for the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion. The safest way to ship it is in solid form. No pipeline expansion means no social or first nations impacts, and no need to bail out Kinder Morgan with the $4.5 billion to $12 billion this is estimated to cost. There is certainly no need to buy this aging 65-year old leaky pipeline. All of the savings that could have come from not using taxpayer money that way and all of the benefit that could have come to our country is deeply discouraging. Therefore, I am going to outline the reasons I think it is not in the national interest in the following areas: first nations relationship and our constitutional obligations; endangered species; climate change; oil spill risk; fossil fuel subsidies; and, last, coastal jobs.

Starting with endangered species, the federal government has a clear responsibility to protect species at risk. There was a 2012 court order that told the government it needed to put measures in place to protect the habitat of the orca, which was the number one impact that was identified in the National Energy Board review. As meagre as that review was, it did say that the shipping noise impact was unavoidable and without remediation. The government went ahead and approved the pipeline anyway. The important thing for members to know is that the shipping noise interferes with the orca whales' ability to communicate with each other and to locate the chinook salmon they feed on. Their numbers before the 2012 court ruling were 87 members of the southern resident orca pod, which has now dropped to 75. This summer, international headlines focused the world's attention on the plight of this endangered species. The fact that environmental groups just last week filed another lawsuit against the Liberal government for its failure to protect the orcas shows that its vaunted oceans protection plan is not helping orcas yet.

With respect to the first nations consultations, for the finance minister to say, the very day of the court ruling, that the pipeline will be built and that we will also consult first nations leadership again shows the Liberal government does not get it. It cannot say it is going to consult but it has already decided what it is going to do.

We keep hearing from the government that its most meaningful relationship is with first nations, yet they continue to be pushed to the side. It is particularly coastal first nations that I am talking about here. Certainly, I am reminded by my constituents that this is not all first nations. However, in my own riding, the leadership is extremely concerned and opposed to the approval and expansion of the pipeline because of the oil tanker traffic.

Here is a message that I received this morning by text from my friend, Doug White III. Kwul'a'sul'tun is his Coast Salish name, his Hul'q'umi'num' name. He is a former chief of the Snuneymuxw First Nation, and he is an elected councillor now. He states that, "Snuneymuxw has been frustrated that while [Kinder Morgan] and the [National Energy Board] said the project ends at the Burnaby terminal, and [Kinder Morgan] has no responsibility beyond that point with respect to tanker shipping of bitumen through the Salish Sea (which represents a total risk of the way of life of the Salish peoples...), they have taken it upon themselves to unilaterally define the project as being in the national interest without ever sitting down with the Snuneymuxw to discuss how the foundational pre-Confederation Treaty of 1854 structures such a decision."

● (1400)

He goes on to say, "Completely ignoring and effectively denying the Treaty of 1854—particularly its powerful protection of fisheries in the Salish Sea—is the opposite of recognition and reconciliation. Even the colonial government of Vancouver Island in the 1850s knew the basic legal and political reality that they could not extract resources of Vancouver Island without establishing a proper relationship premised on recognition and respect of the continuity of Indigenous control and decision-making about their territories and resources. That is why the Douglas Treaties were established 160 years ago. We have to ask: Is the approach of the current government of Canada less than even a colonial government in the 1850s? The answer is clear."

That is a condemnation and a huge damage to the national interest, which is of true reconciliation. That is the only way we can move forward.

So much has been said on climate. I am reminded by my constituent David in Nanaimo who wrote to the Prime Minister saying, "Your government says this Texas oil company's pipeline is in the national interest. We believe that having a safe climate is in our national interest, and the two are not compatible."

I could not say it better myself. The disaster that is climate change barrelling down on us while the government has still failed to do anything stronger than adopt the emission reduction targets of the Harper Conservatives is a deep betrayal. The true national interest would be to truly act strongly and reduce climate change emissions.

On oil tanker safety and protection of the coast, the waters that I represent are one of the four areas in Canada with the highest probability of a large oil spill, according to the 2013 federal tanker safety panel of Transport Canada. It is one of the two areas in Canada with the highest potential impact of a spill.

In 2009, as chair of Islands Trust council, I wrote to the federal government when it was the Conservative government saying, "Please tell us that you are studying the impacts of dilbit, diluted bitumen, in the marine environment." That evidence was blocked from the National Energy Board. I have been asking repeatedly in question period for the Liberal government to take action, and it has not. We have no demonstrated way to clean up dilbit in the marine environment, especially in a place with the speed of currents and rise and fall of tides that we have.

My constituent Mark wrote to the Prime Minister saying, "Any spill in the oceans surrounding Vancouver Island and the Strait of Georgia would be a national disaster." I agree with him: not in the national interest but a national disaster.

This also breaks the promise that the Canadian government has made to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. That was a promise made to the G20. It has been repeated again and again. The government has been fighting with the Auditor General these past three years. It will not show the evidence that says it is acting on fossil fuel subsidies. Certainly the purchase of the Kinder Morgan pipeline for $4.5 billion is evidence of further breaking of that fossil fuel subsidy promise. What that money could have been invested in instead, redirecting fossil fuel subsidies into establishing coastal jobs, green, sustainable jobs in renewable industries, would really be keeping all of our promises.

So much is on the line for us on the coast. A UBC study in 2012 said that the potential impacts of a large oil tanker spill could lead to as much as a 43% loss of employment in the province's coastal industries. Twenty thousand people on the Lower Mainland could be affected by a spill, and as much as $687 million in damage to the GDP from a single spill. Again this was identified by UBC.

In closing, I say, again, this is not in the national interest. As a kayak guide, I have had the great privilege of exploring so many of Vancouver Island's and B.C.'s wild places. I am deeply determined, along with my constituents, to stand up and protect the coast. Investing in and accelerating Kinder Morgan's oil tanker traffic is absolutely the opposite of the national interest, and I hope this House will agree.

● (1405)

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to add my comments to this very important debate on S-245. I would like to note the comments of my colleague for Lakeland as she kicked off the debate. She very articulately laid out this project, the time frames and some of the history. I will not redo what she said but I hope to add some new comments to the debate which should be reflected upon.

Even though the landscape has changed since this initial private member's motion in the Senate was introduced, passed and moved to us, it still remains a very important bill for us to pass in the House. Again, the landscape has changed considerably, but we must and should pass it.

I know that in an ideal world we would not have any dependence on fossil fuels. However, we continue to have that dependence. It is not just the gasoline for our car or the jet fuel for the planes that fly us to Ottawa and back home. Over 6,000 products require the use of oil.

In the short and medium term, the world, not just Canada, will continue to rely on oil and its products. I do have a belief that there will be technological advances that will create some solutions.

Dave McKay, the president of RBC, said, "Canadians are polarized about oil and gas when we should be focused on how cleanly we can produce it, how safely we can transport it and how wisely we can consume it." Those are very important words.

Alberta is working very hard on how to cleanly produce. The discussion we are having today is how we can safely transport and then it is up to every individual to look at how wisely to consume it.

The government has decided to put all its eggs into one basket. The tanker moratorium simply means that people from Lac du Ronge and Eagle Spirit have been cut off, with no consultation on the opportunities they thought might be there for their communities. Of course, that would be a northern route. This bill is currently in the Senate. Again, it cuts off opportunity to get oil to the sea water.

Bill C-69 has been called the "never build another pipeline again" bill. I tend to agree. Changes proposed in Bill C-69 mean that another pipeline will never be built in Canada again. That is a huge problem. We can look at what is happening in the States and across the world. We basically have landlocked resources. In the short and medium term, we will be uncompetitive.

Having a "no pipeline" bill is important. However, what people do not realize is this. Look at the rail traffic. I live on a rail line. I was at a ceremony this week for a change of command for the Rocky Mountain Rangers. Fifteen metres from us was a rail line, which goes straight through Kamloops. Tanker car after tanker car travel right through town and along the Fraser River. It had already come down the Thompson River while salmon were spawning.

When we talk about transportation safety, it is relatively safe. However, it is more safe to transport oil through a pipeline than by tanker cars, which travel right through the middle of town and along the spawning channels. We have had wildfires. We have seen the instability of slopes when rains come. We are having washouts. There is big concern about the enormous increase in the tanker cars that go through our communities.

This does not even address the issue that we hear all the time from our grain farmers and mining folks about the bottleneck on the rail lines. As the rail capacity increases for tanker cars to transport oil, we bottleneck our supply system, our supply chain. This is a huge problem.

● (1410)

Northern gateway and the TMX is really a tale of two pipelines, because it has been largely decision-making by the current government.

Northern gateway went through its process and it was approved by the former government. A court decision came out and it was very clear. The Liberal government received that court decision. It said that some things needed to be done to improve consultation with first nations.

The decision was received by the current Liberal government. Every time those members suggest that they inherited a flawed process, it is quite clear that it was not the process but it was the execution of the process with northern gateway. It became much clearer that they did not learn any lessons after reading that report, in spite of the fact that they said they had. The Liberals completely botched their execution with respect to the duty to consult on the Trans Mountain pipeline.

The first decision said they could not simply be a note-taker. The Liberals had that information. What did they do? They sent someone to take notes. How is that looking at a decision and implementing it?

The minister stood up time after time and said that there was no relationship more important than the government's relationship with first nations. He said they were engaged, that they have had the best process ever, and yet his government did the exact same thing. Someone was sent to take notes and the government did nothing in terms of dealing with the issues at hand.

The Liberals failed. They failed as plaintiffs. Six communities took them to court with respect to the duty to consult. More important, they also failed 43 communities that had benefit agreements and were looking forward to the opportunities that would come with the construction of this pipeline going through their territory.

About one-third of the pipeline goes through the riding that I represent, which includes many communities as well as many first nations communities, the majority of which had signed benefit agreements.

After the decision came down I met with a number of first nations and other communities. One group had to completely redo its budget. It had counted on the benefits from this agreement. This group had to wonder what it could slice and dice out of its budget because it was faced with brand-new circumstances.

I met with another group called Simpcw Resource Group. As construction happened, and in the past, this company had been responsible for returning the disrupted land from the construction of a pipeline back to its natural vegetative state.

Companies are planting trees as we speak, planning on the economic opportunities. Construction camps are being planned. Cooks were looking forward to opportunities. These are real people. These are real jobs.

The fact that the Liberal government could not look at a court decision that came to them in 2016 and do the job properly is absolutely shameful. It failed to execute. When the government says it had a flawed process given to it, it is absolute nonsense. The government was told what it needed to do in order to do it properly. Please, do not ever let them say they were provided with a flawed process. The court decision was absolutely clear that the process was appropriate, it was the execution that was flawed.

This are real consequences to real people. This matters. I hope that when people look at this they will look at it as a benefit for Canada, not for the benefit of a small area only. This would benefit all of Canada.

I encourage all members of the House not to just look at their concerns and interests but to look at the big picture, look at it for the benefit of Canada.

● (1415)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and hopefully provide a bit of clarity on the issue of the Trans Mountain project. It is of the utmost importance, and ultimately, nothing is going to change my personal thoughts. This is from someone coming from the Prairies, but it goes far beyond the Prairies. The Prime Minister has done a fantastic job in explaining that the Trans Mountain project is in the national interest. It is not just for one province over another province. It is indeed in the national best interest, because every Canadian in all regions of our country would benefit from the project moving forward.

From day one, it has been really important to our government to recognize that there is a significant environmental component and a significant indigenous component. We have heard other members, both Conservative and NDP, repeat what we have been saying from day one, that we have turned the page on the relationship between the national government and indigenous people since the election in 2015. This is a government that wants to move forward in a very progressive fashion.

There is a difference between the New Democrats, the Conservatives, and the government of the day in dealing with the pipeline. We need to recognize a little of the history to get a better understanding of where we are today. I sat on the opposition benches when Prime Minister Stephen Harper had an opportunity to advance this file. He chose not to, even though he was rooted in the province of Alberta. He felt there was no need for the federal government to get engaged at that time. Today, we look at the Trans Mountain project as a way to ensure that our commodity is in fact getting to new markets. That is a big issue to us, because we are so dependent on our oil going south. We know that if we can expand the market we will in fact be able to derive a better bottom line for Canadians. We need to recognize just how much that would really assist Canadians.

My colleague from the province of Alberta spoke earlier. Alberta has been a great contributor to the confederation through the oil royalties. Manitoba has not been as blessed with oil as the province of Alberta. Many would argue that as a result, our province has been very dependent on equalization payments. Where do those equalization payments come from in good part? They come from provinces like Alberta, which are able to export a commodity. With the Province of Manitoba receiving those equalization support payments, we are able to provide the types of social programming that allow us to keep on par with other provinces like Alberta and Ontario with services like health care, quality education, social programs and many others. Even environmental types of programs are carried out with the assistance of equalization payments. Money is transferred to the Province of Manitoba in the billions every year.

Therefore, when we talk about the net benefits of the export of things such as oil, it adds to the overall GDP. Production in one province may be a little more than in another. All Canadians benefit from it. That is done through equalization.

There are many individuals throughout Canada, whether from the Prairies or Newfoundland and Labrador, from every region of the country, whose direct and indirect jobs are a result of things that are taking place in Alberta and British Columbia.

● (1420)

We believe that those types of economic activities are contributing to Canada's overall well-being. We have a Prime Minister who from day one, even before he was prime minister, talked about the importance of Canada's middle class, believing that if we give additional strength to our middle class, if we invest in our middle class, we will have a healthier economy. By having a healthy economy, we raise the standard of living of us all, and so forth.

When the Prime Minister and members of the House discuss that what is happening with the Trans Mountain project and how important it is that it move forward, we need to understand why it is in Canada's national best interest. That is where we differ from our New Democrat friends. When I say New Democrats, it is not universally applied because we know that the Alberta NDP and Rachel Notley are doing a fantastic job trying to explain why it is so important for all of Canada to see this take place.

However, the national NDP does not want a pipeline. It is catering to a certain sector at a huge cost to all Canadians. I would appeal to the members to look back to the days when they were the official opposition hoping to be in government. They seemed to be more reasonable in approaching major policy issues, such as the ones we have before us today. If they do that, there is no reason why all members of the House should not get behind what the government is doing on the Trans Mountain project.

I was so disappointed when a Conservative said that buying out and securing the pipeline was a bad idea. I felt fairly good the day when I heard the announcement because, for the first time, we had a national government that made a very strong statement for the first time about that resource getting to market.

What did the Conservatives do? They started criticizing the government because we had acquired an asset that would ensure to the greatest extent possible that the job would get done. When it came time to stand up for Albertans in particular, but indeed for all Canadians, what did the Conservatives do? They went running behind Stephen Harper and took the Harper type of spin lines. That was what we witnessed firsthand when that announcement was made.

I say shame on the Conservatives, because day after day they tried to say that they wanted a government that would take action, a government that would move forward on this very important and critical pipeline. When the government did just that, what did the Conservatives do? I am disappointed and I would hope that the Conservatives would get behind the initiative by the government. If they truly believe in the well-being of the Canadian economy, in particular those thousands of jobs that would be generated in Alberta and British Columbia and the agreements that are shaping up with many of our indigenous communities, this is a project that is worth supporting no matter which political party one belongs to, with the possible exception of the Green Party. I have heard the leader of the Green Party speak on the issue and I expect there is no changing that particular position.

I would like to think that the other two opposition parties that have been around long enough would understand just how important the Trans Mountain extension is. The Prime Minister does and this government does. In fact, all members of the Liberal caucus in all regions of our country understand just how important this is to the national interest. We are committed to pushing this file forward and doing it in the right way.

● (1425)

That means working with indigenous people, looking out for our environment, and also delivering at the end of the day. That is something we are working toward diligently. I believe it is only a question of time before we will see some better recognition on the opposition benches of just how important this is to Canada's economy and, indeed, our social fabric.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 2:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until Monday next at 11 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 2:30 p.m.)

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